UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

COLLEGE EXPERIENCE ON YOUNG WOMEN AS LEARNERS

BY

PAMELA J. TAYLOR ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

in

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "College Experience on Young Women as Learners" submitted by Pamela J. Taylor in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Adult and Higher Education.

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ABSTRACT

This study uses an ethnological approach to discover the influence one-year in college has on young adult women in the transition from school-to-work. A group of young women, 17-20 years of age, describe their journey through the first year of a diploma program in early childhood education at a large, urban community college. The critical element is to hear the voices of the youngest participants in the learning environment. The data shows that this transition is filled with personal challenges, emotional turmoil, and eventually, a new sense of possibilities. The results of this study are explored through journal articles, conference and in-service presentations, a newspaper interview, and finally, a proposal for a monograph on young adult learners.

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As I began this journey I thought that I was travelling alone. In time the faces of those that accompanied me shone through as I reflected on my own transition as a woman and as an adult. Who were my teachers?

Three women, Alta Leffingwell, Geneva Wyatt and Norma Games—my paternal grandmother, maternal grandmother and mother, respectively, enabled me to see women live with the multiple roles of home and work. Not one would identify herself as a feminist but each saw that they could and must contribute to the economic and social well being of her family. Each of you has given me a strong sense of my personal capabilities. Thank you.

All of my life's work has been the care and education of young children. My days have been filled with women—caregivers, mothers, students, and colleagues. One of the greatest gifts each of you has given me is the opportunity to explore life's possibilities through your lives. Each has given so much and allowed me to be a part of the joys and sorrows of living life fully. Thank you.

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My learning would not have been complete without the willingness of Sherrill Brown to allow me as a participant-observer in her weekly child development classes.

Sherrill, you teach from the heart and your ability to value each and every learner was a powerful message for me. Thank you.

A special thank you goes to my children, Matt and Chantel. Through my children I have been able to live the transition from infancy, to childhood and adolescence, and now, as young adults. I follow you on your first steps into adulthood and am delighted to discover the people that you have become, Each of you has strengthened my belief and commitment that all children receive the very best education, so they too, can become thoughtful and contributing members of society.

I could not have completed this course of study without the support and mentoring of Dr. Paula Brook. As my advisor, Paula, you truly listened and helped me to see that there was significance in the ideas that I was exploring. Paula, with your assistance I have become a better writer and I promise to keep practicing. Thank you.

As my journey comes to a close I have made many personally meaningful discoveries. I've discovered that I like doing research and exploring ideas that puzzle me. Having the opportunity to read and reflect on my teaching I have discovered that I am an adult educator—a good one, too. I have also discovered how much I enjoy and value young adults. Amy, Jennifer, Sarah, Tylare, Emma, Jayne, and Amanda, thank you for allowing me to hear your voices and share in your journey into adulthood.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

When did this journey begin? When was my attention drawn to look more closely at the faces of the young women in the college classroom? Silence, unhappiness, a lack of engagement or interest in learning permeated the environment the young adults and I shared. The women often appeared tired and withdrawn from life; the diploma program that they had chosen, early childhood development, was not a source of joy.

Over time I had become increasingly perplexed by the behaviours exhibited by the students; increasingly, I associated the observed behaviours with the youngest adults in the program. While the young women appeared distracted or unhappy by being in the classroom I was feeling less effective as a college instructor. I saw there was a problem but I could not identify or address it. After twenty years of teaching in the early childhood development program, I wanted to return to school. I hoped to make personal discoveries and gain knowledge to assist me in being a more effective instructor and facilitator of learning for young adults.

Early Childhood Development program

Each fall approximately sixty students enter the first year of the full-time Early Childhood Development (ECD) program. These students must have an Alberta high school diploma or equivalent or have status as a mature student (age 18 or over and out of school for at least one year). Students are selected through small group interviews, and selection is based on the consensus of at least two college staff and one community employer. Individuals who are selected for the program must demonstrate that they are prepared to achieve the "highest skills and sensitivity to work with the youngest children

in our society. It requires people who communicate well, and who positively value caring,...sensitive, empathic individuals who understand that feeling is also a way of knowing" (Grant MacEwan Community College, 1998-1999, p. 64). Any courses (related to reading, writing and English proficiency) required as a result of a skills appraisal administered by the college must be completed prior to entering the full-time program.

Early Childhood Development is a community college program leading to a two-year diploma. Studies in this program foster the development of skills and knowledge to work with the youngest children in our society. Students learn to accept the challenges associated with providing quality care; to establish partnerships with families to provide this care; to view each child as a unique human being; to gain an appreciation for people with diverse lifestyles, values, cultural backgrounds, ethnic origins, religious beliefs; and to foster healthy living habits. Students experience developmentally appropriate childcare practices in four field placement practicums.

The majority of the students entering the ECD program, 96%, are female (Institutional Research and Planning, 1998). For this reason alone I chose to focus solely on women in my research. Students ages 18 and under and 19-20 years constitute 64% of the students enrolled in this program. In contrast, 28% of the entering students are ages 21-24, 5% are 25-30 years of age, and 31-45 years of age represent 3% of the entrants.

Year one and two of the ECD program operate from September to December and January to April. Classes are scheduled from Monday to Friday one week and then alternate with a four-day week in a field placement practicum. All students complete one supervised field placement in a daycare centre and one in either a kindergarten or nursery school in the first year. In year two students can select from a wide variety of settings for

their last two supervised placements: school-aged programs, playrooms in women's shelters, in-home family daycare, hospital playrooms, kindergartens (as assistants), parent relief daycare centres, and early intervention programs.

In year one a student completes twelve courses. First term courses are ECDV 100, Introduction to Early Childhood; ECDV 105, Health, Nutrition and Safety; ECDV 110, Child Development I; ECDV 115, Understanding Self-Esteem; ECDV 120, Field Placement I; and ECDV 125, Integration Seminar I. Courses in the second term are ECDV 155, Learning Through Play; ECDV 160, Child Development II; ECDV 165, Communicating with Children; ECDV 170, Field Placement II; ECDV 175, Integration Seminar II; and ENGL 111, Communications. Total hours of instruction for the first year are 850 hours.

Year two students complete in their first term ECDV 200, Social Studies, Math and Science; ECDV 205, Fine Arts with Children; ECDV 210, Family-Centred Practice; ECDV 215, Applied Communication Skills; ECDV 220, Field Placement III, ECDV 225, Integration Seminar III; and OOSC 200, Introduction to Out of School Care. The final term in the college students study ECDV 250, Foundations of Early Childhood; ECDV 255, Child Development III; ECDV 260, Family and Community Issues; ECDV 265, Effective Team Skills; and ECDV 270, Field Placement IV; and ECDV 275, Integration Seminar IV. Total hours of instruction, are the same as for the first year of the program, 850 hours.

Classes in the second year are larger than those in the first year of the ECD program. Grant MacEwan College accepts into the second year of the program students who have completed their first-year studies in ECD from colleges throughout Alberta.

Occasionally there will also be students who transfer from programs outside of the province. Students may also enter from the part-time day or part-time evening program to pursue their studies on a full-time basis. Generally the students who transfer from part-time to full-time studies are mature students, many already employed and working in the field. These students bring an interesting mix of life and work experiences to the classroom and contribute significantly to the learning of all students.

Students in the full-time program receive instruction from four full-time instructors and approximately eight part-time instructors. Instructors have diverse academic backgrounds and professional expertise. Family studies, social work, early childhood education, early childhood development, adult education, special education and child and youth care are just some of the academic and professional backgrounds of the college instructors.

Academic and professional possibilities definitely increase for graduates of the ECD program. Women are employed in diverse settings (daycare centres, preschool playrooms, child life programs in pediatric wards of hospitals, playrooms in the women's shelters, school-aged childcare programs, early intervention programs) or provide supported childcare or teaching assistance to children with special educational needs. Working titles for ECD graduates include daycare worker, daycare teacher, early childhood worker, nursery school teacher, supported childcare worker, family day home provider, kindergarten assistant or aide, child life worker, or out of school care worker.

Academically, graduates have numerous post-diploma options. Transfer agreements with other educational institutions enable them to continue their studies in such fields as elementary education, early childhood education, adult education, human

ecology, child and youth care, family studies, and human service administration. In broadening academic and professional opportunities for its graduates, the ECD program creates a "lattice" to provide the "professional knowledge, performances, and dispositions connected with the early childhood profession's diverse roles, levels and settings" (Johnson & McCracken, 1994, p. 5).

My Professional Role (in the ECD Program)

For the last twenty years I have been a full-time adult educator in the ECD program. I did not set out to be a college instructor working with adults; rather, my professional life began as a daycare worker. In time, knowing I needed more knowledge of the care and education of young children, I entered the University of Victoria and completed a B.A. in Child Care. Upon returning to Alberta I worked briefly in child life at the University of Alberta Hospital.

A position in the demonstration daycare centre at Grant MacEwan Community College opened up and I was asked to apply. I was delighted to accept the position, as it gave me the opportunity to work with children, their families and the college students in the daycare centre. In time I was asked to apply again for a teaching position in the ECD program—with my years of experience in the field and my educational background, I began working as a college instructor.

Each fall I teach Introduction to Early Childhood Development as well as Health, Nutrition and Safety. In the winter term I teach the first year students Learning Through Play. I also teach to students in year two Child Development III. In field placement practicums and integration seminars I have the opportunity to support student learning in

the field and work with a small number of first-and second-year students on an individual basis.

Questioning teaching practice

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, I began to question my teaching effectiveness. My area of expertise was early childhood development, but I had not had the opportunity to study and reflect on my role as an adult educator. I had reached a point where I was asking more questions than I had answers. I needed to know more about adult learners and about myself as an adult educator. I made the decision to enter the M.Ed. in Adult and Higher Education and pursue further education.

In the fall of 1996, I entered another college classroom—my teaching colleague's Child Development class--and began my research in the field with a niggling doubt that what I had experienced in my classroom teaching would not be the reality in someone else's classroom. Fieldnotes from my eight months as a participant-observer reflected the troublesome student behaviours that left me unsure of my teaching capabilities. An entry dated September 24, 1996 indicates that as the teacher began to play a video, I scanned the room and noted "there are three students asleep and across the room another is nodding her head, finally she comes to rest on the table. So how do you teach someone who seems too tired to learn?" On October 8, 1996, I heard the teacher engaged in a discussion with the class and as she spoke I noted "two students are working on an assignment for another class, while another student is searching through her knapsack. Side conversations can be softly heard. A's head has been down on the table for the last twenty minutes. I wonder what the young women are receiving from their time in the classroom?" I began to see the same difficulties I had experienced in my teaching and

wondered why these young women chose to be in this class, and how they had decided this was the program for them.

In observing a colleague in the ECD program teaching I began to see that teaching ineffectiveness did not appear to be the problem and students were engaged in the same behaviours that had previously puzzled me. I also knew that our graduates could identify many strengths in the program that benefited them in their work in the field. I felt even more certain that I needed to hear from the young women in the first year of the program and to know more about this group of learners.

I truly wanted to hear the women's words: their stories. I wanted to fully explore the transition of young women moving from secondary education to a career preparation program. My head was filled with questions. Why did they choose to study early childhood development? What were their secondary school experiences? How had college impacted them? How did they see themselves as learners after one year in college? What role did the young women see for themselves in the world of work?

The Study

Ethnography as a choice of methodology allowed me to conduct a qualitative inquiry. Learning from the participants' reality I began to explore a particular group of women to discover what they do and know—their culture (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Agar (as cited in Boyle, 1994) states an ethnographer is engaged in a process to "learn about or understand some human group" (p. 161). This approach afforded the opportunity to learn from the participants' perspectives of reality: the emic perspective—"the heart of ethnographic research" (Boyle, J., 1994, p. 166). As an ethnographer, I was concerned with accurately representing the participants' perspectives and depicting the new

meanings to be found in their words and experiences. As noted by Wax (as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) "shared meaning" (p. 39) resulted for the participants and me as we discovered the value or meaning college or an identified program held for them.

The question under inquiry in my research was "What influence does college have on young adult women in the transition from school-to-work?" The critical element was to hear the voices of the youngest participants in the learning environment. Participants 17-20 years of age enter college as "Stage 1" adults or "younger young adults—persons in their late teens and early twenties," as defined by Darkenwald & Knox (1984, p. 100). I wanted to understand a young woman's reality as she makes this important transition of a youth moving into adulthood: "a process rather than an arbitrary event in one's life" (Galaway & Hudson, 1996, p. XIV). Hearing the words and experiences of "younger young adults" would enable me to appreciate the importance of this transition.

Entering the field

Boyle (1994) has stated that "*fieldwork* is the hallmark of ethnographic research" allowing the researcher to "work with people for long periods of time in their natural setting" (p. 162). "Being in the subjects' world" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) allowed me to learn from the young women, to visit frequently in their environment, and discover what it is to be them. The essential element was to "develop a fieldwork relationship with the keepers of the material" (p. 80). Fieldnotes from September 17 and 24, 1996 document my entry into the classroom as a participant-observer. The instructor of the Child Development course gave me permission to be present in the classroom and the opportunity to introduce myself as a researcher. I wanted to be overt in my approach—

identifying my interests as a researcher rather than as a college instructor and seeking the cooperation of the participants.

In the initial discussions with the two sections of students in the Early Childhood Development program, I spoke of the purpose of my study. I wanted to learn how to conduct research. I wanted to learn from them about their first year in college and in the early childhood program. I publicly stated that nothing I wrote in my fieldnotes would go beyond the classroom except as a part of my study or to share with my committee. I reassured the participants that I would not identify anyone by name and, as well, my research would not influence the grades they received in any of their first-year courses.

I can still see the faces of the women as I spoke with them. I'm sure that I was nervous—this was all so new to me, and I wanted to gain their trust so that my research would accurately reflect their experiences in college. The words of one of the students seemed particularly supportive when she said, "so you are learning how to be a researcher? Like us—learning something we don't know either." I smiled at her, feeling a strong affinity with her about our positions of unknowing.

Focus group and piloting questions

The next step in the research process was to formulate questions for the participants' questionnaire. I devised four headings that related to the study--"high school," "college," "career/jobs," and "personal view." Ten possible questions were then created to address the four areas and were used to trigger dialogue between the participants and me in a focus group.

Through the part-time ECD program I invited student volunteers to participate in a focus group in October 1996. Participants were informed of the purpose of my research

and the criteria for participating in the focus group were outlined: 17-20 years of age and having entered college upon completion of high school. I was extremely pleased with the willingness of this group of six young women to share their thoughts on the relevance of the proposed questions and to clarify the wording and language used in the questions. I wanted to ensure that my choice of language and the format of the questions would provoke thoughtful responses from the participants. I asked the participants as a group to identify the questions that they would like to answer, questions that they felt they wouldn't want to answer, or any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. The participants were then asked individually to rate the questions identifying the question in each section that they would like to answer or found to be of personal interest and to place a check mark beside any question that they wouldn't want to answer.

The focus group's enthusiastic responses reassured me that young women had many insights to offer about their high school learning experiences, personal views of themselves as learners, and their future hopes for working with young children. Their words and stories alone were rich with detail and given freely. As one young woman left the room she turned to me and said, "Thanks for asking us what we think. No one has ever asked before."

I analyzed the information gathered from the focus group and then shared it with my advisor. Together we clarified the intent of each of the questions, and formulated the five questions (see Appendix C: Questionnaire Administered to Participants) that would frame the research questionnaire. Eventually the five questions were used to structure the final interview with each of the participants as well.

Five questions now framed the research: how the participants' high school experiences prepared the young women for college, the choice of their specific area of study (early childhood education), a significant person that encouraged further education, how they knew early childhood was the right program for them, and last, their first year college experiences.

Ethical considerations

In the next phase of the research process, late fall 1996, I chose to inform all the first-year students in the Early Childhood Program of the study through a letter of introduction (see Appendix A: Letter of Introduction). The criteria for participating in the research were outlined: women in Edmonton, Alberta who entered community college upon graduation from high school, and who were under twenty years of age. Any first-year student who met the criteria and wished to participate in the research was invited to attend a session in the college. At this time I introduced the written consent form (see Appendix B: Written Consent Form), discussing it with the participants and asking for their signatures if they agreed to continue with the study. I then administered the questionnaire and asked for their written responses to the five questions (see Appendix C: Questionnaire Administered to Participants). I requested each participant to contribute to two sessions—first, a written questionnaire based on the previously identified questions, and second, an individual interview.

The trustworthiness of this research has been critically important to my personal integrity and ultimately my credibility as a researcher. *"Credibility,"* Leininger (1994) has stated "refers to the 'truth,' value, or 'believability' of the findings" (p. 105). Care has been taken to make each step of the research process transparent and clearly

documented. I have worked closely with my thesis advisor engaging in regular discussions about the research process and my analysis of the data. I have maintained a personal journal to demonstrate prolonged engagement with my research topic. Detailed fieldnotes of all of the participant observations have been recorded and filed and they contain both descriptive and reflective content. Multiple sources of data were used in the conducting of my research: a questionnaire, participation observations and interviews.

Questionnaire

On October 21, 1996, seven self-selected participants chose to contribute to the study and to my learning. I verbally explained again the research that I was conducting and, seeking their cooperation in the research, stated the importance of the participants to my learning. Each young woman received a written consent form (see Appendix B: Written Consent Form) outlining the study and utilization of the materials generated in the study, offering the option to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and addressing issues of anonymity, confidentiality and personal well-being. I answered any questions that arose for the participants. The young women were then invited to sign the consent form if they felt that they were able to participate in the research. Each young woman received and completed a questionnaire in writing (see Appendix C: Questionnaire Administered to Participants).

The data from the questionnaire was then collected and analyzed. Initially the brevity of the participants' responses in writing discouraged me. The written responses did not reflect the depth of thought that had been present in the verbal and written responses received from the focus group. Some themes, though, emerged from the written responses of the participants. This data showed that participants had entered the

ECD program even though it was not their first choice of a program of study, that parents played a significant role encouraging their daughters to pursue further education, and all of the participants were aware that they would have to assume more responsibility for their learning now that they had entered college.

Interviews

Near the end of their first year in college, these same seven participants were invited, and six agreed, to individually share their thoughts on audiotape in semi-structured interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews enabled me to gain comparable data from all of the subjects while still allowing for individual contributions to the ideas being explored. The initial five questions (see Appendix C: Questionnaire Administered to Participants) guided but did not limit the content of the six interviews. The interviews were used to solicit the individual experiences of the young women as the first year of college was coming to a close. The data collected from the interviews would be employed along with the data gathered from the initial questionnaires and the weekly participant observations to offer me multiple sources of data and a more in-depth knowledge of the participants' college experiences. Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the young women and were conducted in a private meeting room at the community college.

I sent each participant a transcript by mail after the one-and-a-half hour interview. I also included a letter asking each young woman to read and review the transcript for the accuracy of her thoughts and words encouraging her to offer any corrections or deletions to her transcript.

Data analysis

Throughout the eight months of this study data were collected from a number of sources: the participants' questionnaires, the participant observations and my personal fieldnotes, and the transcripts of the interviews with the participants. The use of multiple sources of data enabled me to achieve "one characteristic of an ethnographic study" (Boyle, 1994, p. 164) and fulfill one of the elements of qualitative research—triangulation. As an ethnographer, I have had the opportunity to live in this material and to live with the participants in the daily life of the classroom. The depth of my work and the multiple sources of data has led to the creation of "thick description" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 39) and to my ability to interpret and give shared meaning to the experiences of young women in their first year in college.

Repeated readings of the questionnaires and audiotaped transcripts, listening to the interview tapes, and reviewing fieldnotes from the participant observations allowed a picture to be constructed of the first-year college experiences from the perspective of the young women. In time, and with care, salient elements were identified through inductive analysis of the data, allowing me to hear the voices of these young women as they explored this unique period in their lives.

Thesis format

The process that I have chosen to follow for data analysis—repeated cycles of reading, writing, reflecting, and presenting--has allowed me to continue learning from the findings of the research and increase the depth of my understanding of young women as learners in their first year in college. I believe this process has allowed me to fully experience the reflexive nature of ethnographic research.

Equally important to me has been to move the research process beyond a solitary experience which would inform only myself. Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) speak in favor of the ethnographic tradition as one supporting "engaged advocacy and a critical stance" (p. 249). I have been able to honour this tradition by identifying opportunities to inform colleagues and the broader community of the individual perspectives and personal motivations of a small group of young women.

This thesis follows a nontraditional format presenting my research, specifically, in a Paper Format (Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, 1997, p. 4) in which the body of each "Chapter" is essentially self-contained with its own bibliography. This first Chapter is the introduction and overview of the research. The first two pieces of writing (contained in chapters 2 and 3) I have used to "tell" the stories of the young women, the participants in my research. Each story describes the transition from secondary to postsecondary education and begins to explore the young women's relationship to the world of work. A journey that initially appeared so simple to my eyes quickly increased in complexity. My appreciation for their personal growth and ability to make sense of this transition into adulthood grew over time.

Getting a life

The document in Chapter 2 has been developed as a journal article to communicate the results of my research to a broader audience—adult educators seeking to address the learning needs of young adults. Chapter 2, entitled *Getting a life: A metaphor for growth for first year students*, describes the transition of six young women as they explore their first year in college. The article has been submitted to the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, University of

South Carolina, and is currently under consideration for publication in the Journal of the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

While these women were part of the group of students I previously described in the participant observations in the classroom, they agreed to go one step further and chose to be significant contributors to a written questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The data show that this transition is filled with personal challenges, emotional turmoil, and eventually, a new sense of possibilities.

Inclusive postsecondary education

Chapter 3 presents the experiences of one of the female participants in a case study: *Hearing Amy's voice: An exemplar of inclusive postsecondary education*. This journal article has been submitted for publication and is currently under consideration with the Developmental Disabilities Bulletin, at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta. Amy enables us to hear that adults with developmental disabilities continue to learn and grow with their peers in a college classroom.

Amy chose to be a participant in my research and her contributions were welcomed. The taped semi-structured interview challenged Amy—and me—to accurately share and record her thoughts and analyze them. Reflected in Amy's words we discover that access to postsecondary education is important to her and allows her to continue to grow as a young adult.

Research presentations—learning with others

Once I had heard from the research participants and observed them in the classroom, I wanted to speak with others, especially other adult educators, to discover their experiences facilitating the learning of young adults. I also wanted to increase my

personal comfort in speaking as an adult educator, sharing ideas, and continuing to clarify my understanding of young adults in a postsecondary environment. Chapter 4 contains a record of the six presentations that I made based on this research, *Teaching Colloquium*—Grant MacEwan Community College; *Presentation to Alberta Colleges with Early Childhood Programs; Child Care Conference*—Edmonton, Alberta; *Inservice to the Legal Assistant Program*—Edmonton, Alberta; *Lilly Conference on College & University Teaching Northwest*—Portland, Oregon; and, to the *Educational Liaison Association of Alberta*—Banff, Alberta. A presentation handout summarizing my research can be found in Appendix D.

Teaching young adults in the college classroom

A rationale for writing a monograph, *Teaching young adults in the college classroom*, is found in Chapter 5 (the actual proposal for the monograph can be found in Appendix E). I view such a document as another way to continue discussions with adult educators about their work with young learners. We need to know more about the learners who enter the classroom and be sensitized to their unique needs.

A monograph on teaching young adults in the college classroom can provide educators with an opportunity to reflect on their teaching in a positive and supportive manner. Skillful teaching requires us "to talk to [our] colleagues" (Brookfield, 1990, p. 201) and such a document may help us to move away from the isolation often experienced by adult educators teaching in the classroom.

Finding a woman's voice

Chapter 6 discusses a dialogue that I sought to create, via a newspaper column, between the community external to the college environment and me (see Appendix F). I

wanted to reach parents—especially parents of young women. The young women in my study indicated that their parents, particularly their mothers, played a significant role in determining choice of studies and giving them direction toward their future lives. Through a local newspaper columnist I was able to share my ideas on the importance of parents exploring potential careers with their daughters. Ms. Liane Faulder, a columnist for the *Edmonton Journal*, presented our interview under the heading "No white knights, girls; get a job that pays."

Conclusion—College experience on young women as learners

The concluding Chapter 7 brings forward all my thoughts regarding young adults in the college classroom and the role of the educator in working with young adults. The intent of the final Chapter is to "relate the separate studies to each other and to a relevant discipline or field of study" (Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, 1997, p. 5).

Over time I have been able to appreciate the complexity of these first-year experiences for young learners. As well, I have gained an understanding of my role as an adult educator to create an environment that can sustain and nurture young adults. Building a caring community that supports relationships and validates young learners may help to provide the foundation enabling young adults to become life-long learners.

One final concluding remark. "Revision" Oakley (1992) has called "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction..." (p. 2). My journey has allowed me to gain "fresh eyes" with which to see the learners—and to see myself.

My opening paragraph described the images I held of the young learners and of life in the college classroom as I began my studies and research. In time a new

perspective or a "revision" occurred for me—in how I perceived myself as an adult educator and in my relationship with the young learners. When I look into the classroom now, I see the emerging possibilities within each of the students. I know I am engaged in a dialogue with each of the learners—even if the dialogue is initially one-sided or a sharing of silence. I've reaffirmed for myself that a caring relationship with an adult learner is one that acknowledges success, values effort and encourages growth and reflection. I want to continue to explore with young adults what a sense of community would be for them in a classroom environment. Just as the young women were able to describe the changes, the personal growth each had experienced, it is my hope that the reader will also discover in my words the growth and changes that can also occur for an adult as an educator.

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Chapter 2

Getting a life: A metaphor for growth for first year students

(This chapter was submitted to *Journal of the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition*)

Introduction

Entry into adulthood is often viewed as a time of new beginnings, new found freedoms, and endless possibilities. Young adulthood, as defined by Darkenwald and Knox (1984) is that portion of the life span from ages "sixteen or seventeen to approximately age thirty-four" (p. 100). Merriam (1984a) characterized this period of life as having its "own unique constellation of psychological issues and sociocultural tasks," and states that it is the "clustering of these individual issues and tasks during young adulthood that sets this stage of adulthood apart from other stages" (p. 3).

Psychologically, young adults are seeking to resolve issues surrounding the "internal concerns" (Darkenwald & Knox, 1984, p. 101) of independence, identity, and intimacy. The resolution of each issue will be on an individualized basis, and the rate at which changes occur [is] "a product of an individual's total personality, lifestyle and subculture" (Schroeder, 1992, p. 385). Sociocultural tasks enable the young adult to achieve the "social behaviour appropriate to the culture" (Merriam, 1984a, p. 7). Adult status sets expectations that one will choose an occupation, establish an intimate relationship, and start a family: tasks traditionally associated with maturity.

Theories of psychosocial development have been applied to the transition into young adulthood. Erikson (as cited in Bee & Mitchell, 1984) identified two age-related concerns: resolutions of the dilemma between identity versus role confusion, ages 13-18;

and intimacy versus isolation, age 19-25 (p. 384). A young person begins to consider the future and forms an identity based on sexual, occupational, and ideological identities. Levinson (as cited in Bee, 1996; Schroeder, 1992) identified the "early adult transition," ages 17-22 as the stage in which a young person begins to question, change or end "existing relationships with important persons, groups, institutions; [and] to reappraise and modify the self that formed in [these relationships]" (p. 385). Leaving adolescence, a young person establishes a "sense of identity separate from one's family of origin" (Levinson, as cited in Merriam, 1984b, p. 7).

Loevinger (as cited in Bee, 1996) explores stages of ego development in adults: stages that are "sequential and cumulative, not inevitable" (p. 59). The "conformist" stage of ego development relates to adolescent development, and the "conscientious" stage reflects the identity formation of young adults (Bee; Merriam). The conformist adheres to societal norms and expectations while the conscientious stage sees an adult's increasing self-awareness and exploration of life's possibilities.

The relevance of many of the theorists of adult development has been questioned with regard to women (Bee, 1996; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Merriam, 1984b). Research conducted mainly by men with largely male samples does not reflect women's experiences nor allow for a complete picture of human development. A female's identity is formulated more in connection to others, and females' separation from families is less forceful than for males, as studies show.

Josselson (1987) explored identity formation with senior women in colleges and universities. While Erikson saw identity formation as the adolescent seeking to establish a separate identity, independent of parents, Josselson found that for adolescent females

interpersonal competence was more important than autonomy. Young adults' achieving independence was also examined by Sheehy (1974); "pulling up roots" (p. 32) marks the first steps towards independence for 18-22 year olds. Sheehy noted that while males express the need to separate and establish their identity, females most often seek attachment, realizing their identity through others, especially through marriage (p. 78).

Awareness of women's cognitive and ethical development arose from the narratives of women's lives. Gilligan (1982) heard in women a "different voice" (p. 2) expressed in a care model concerned with connections and attachments between people. Belenky et al. (1986) explored women's use of the "metaphor of voice": the intertwining of voice, mind and self (p. 18). Appreciation for women's development leads to support for the preference of learners for connected knowing; "to think with someone than think against someone" (Clinchy, 1994, p. 123).

Bibby and Posterski (1992) in their national survey of Canadian youth, ages 15-19, note that young women in the 1990s have not achieved nor experienced equality. Young women "receive treatment that is inferior" (p. 136); the identified indicators of this inferior treatment are the concerns held by females about their appearance, competence, personal safety, unwanted attention, and persistence of old roles. How can young women move in new directions, accept challenges or take risks while holding the view, as did the young women in Bibby and Posterski's study that they lack a sense of "general competence" (Bibby & Posterski, 1992, p. 147)? It seems that many young women are standing on shaky ground as they enter adulthood and feeling hesitant about their ability to make important life decisions.

Belief in one's self, confidence, assurance, and even a sense of pride: all are captured under the heading of self-esteem. Theorists have noted the wide-ranging effects of lowered self-esteem--on a female's academic performance (Kostash, 1987; Stevenson, 1990), on self-concept (Edwards, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Steinem, 1993), on one's ability to be heard (Gilligan, Lyons, Hanmer, 1990), and on feelings of self-confidence and competence (Orenstein, 1994). Young women face societal dangers and life issues that must be addressed if these women are to develop the personal strengths and feelings of self-worth required to sustain them and allow them to make their personal contributions (Jaffe, 1990; Pipher, 1994).

For young women high school was identified generally as stressful (Bibby & Posterski, 1992) and irrelevant (Gaskell, 1987). Gilligan and associates found that by fifteen years of age, "more than twice as many girls located powerful learning experiences outside of school than inside" (Gilligan, Lyons, Hanmer, 1990, p. 14). It would appear that the end of high school affords a person with new opportunities but not necessarily with the confidence to pursue those possibilities.

Attending college does impact people. Astin's work (1993) shows that students are changed by their experiences in a postsecondary environment; changes include more positive self-image, decreases in psychological well-being, declines in grade-point averages between high school and college, substantial growth in knowledge and skills, and intellectual and personal growth through peer group interactions (pp. 396-410). While his research focused on four-year colleges and universities, it is probable that students would be changed even by one year in a college program.

Methodology and participants

Ethnography is the choice of methodology when exploring a particular group of women to discover what they do and know--their culture (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). As Agar (as cited in Boyle, 1994) noted, an ethnographer is engaged in a process "to learn about or understand some human group" (p. 161). This approach afforded the opportunity to learn from the participants' perspectives of reality: the emic perspective (Morse & Field, 1995, p. 26).

The question in this study was "What influence does college have on young adult women in the transition from school-to-work?" The critical element was to hear the voices of the youngest participants in the learning environment. As well, it is important to understand a young woman's reality as she makes this important transition of a youth moving into adulthood, "a process rather than an arbitrary event in one's life" (Galaway & Hudson, 1996, p. XIV).

The participants chose to study Early Childhood Development, a college program leading to a two-year diploma. Studies in this program foster skill development and the knowledge to work with the youngest children in our society. Graduates learn to accept the challenges associated with providing quality care; to establish partnerships with families to provide this care; to view each child as a unique human being; to gain an appreciation for people with diverse life styles, values, cultural backgrounds, ethnic origins, religious beliefs; and to foster healthy living habits. Students learn developmentally appropriate childcare practices in four field placement practicums.

Five areas framed the research: how the participants' high school experiences prepared the young women for college, the choice of their specific area of study (early

childhood education), a significant person that encouraged further education, how they knew early childhood was the right program for them, and last, their first year college experiences.

Initial questions were piloted with selected key participants who met the criteria for the study: 17-20 years of age and entering college upon graduation from high school. Five questions were developed to reflect the five areas just discussed. Next, seven self-selected participants, from the first year of the early childhood development program, wrote responses to the five questions in the Fall term, 1996. Semi-structured interviews, conducted with six of the seven participants near the end of their first year in college, were guided but not limited by the initial five areas. Fieldnotes, an additional source of data, documented the prolonged, direct contact with the participants. As a participant-observer, the researcher conducted weekly classroom visits over a period of eight months in the young women's child development classes.

Participants, 17-20 years of age, enter college as "Stage 1" adults or "younger young adults--persons in their late teens and early twenties," as defined by Darkenwald and Knox (1984, p. 100). Rather than viewing them as too young or immature, it is important to see this transition through their eyes. Tylare, Sarah, Emma, Jennifer, Amanda, and Jayne, (as participants, each selected a new name to protect her identity), provide invaluable insights about their journey into adulthood in this study.

Repeated readings of the questionnaires and transcripts, listening to the interview tapes, and reviewing field notes facilitated inductive analysis. In time, themes and patterns emerged from the data allowing one to hear the voices of these young women as

they explored this unique period in their lives. The findings represent an integration of all the data over the first year of college.

Findings

Initially, life in the classroom is impacted by previous experiences accompanying the young adult into college. For these female learners, their high school education was of questionable value--inadequately preparing them for college. A lack of enjoyment or enthusiasm for learning was evident when they were asked to describe their experiences in high school. As well, participants openly discussed personal behaviours that negatively impacted their learning in high school.

For Tylare, high school represented restrictions and demands, with teachers stating their demands, "to do this assignment now," and time being tightly controlled by the ringing of "the bell, the bell, the bell!" Sarah noted her problems as a learner and the attitude she held towards learning: "I've never been good in school. Never, ever!" "Um, average. I didn't do spectacular, like," was Amanda's view of herself, and high school was just "kind of do it, as you please." Jennifer's priorities in high school were, "like fun before school." Emma clearly identified "lack of motivation" as negatively impacting her ability to be successful in high school. She went on to say, "I was, well you know, you're in high school . . . skipping, and partying, and all that other stuff." Assignments were not a top priority in high school for these young women. Jennifer's comments regarding assignments were typical for the group: "it was like, I'd do it. Seems good enough. Hand it in. Good enough."

Difficulties in academic subjects led the young women to feel uncertain about their capabilities. For example, Emma stated "I've tried the academic classes and it just

didn't work," and her self-doubts carried through all her years in high school: "Cause I didn't think I was going to graduate, but I did." Jennifer arrived at the end of high school and recognized that "I don't have the marks to go straight into university." Her question, though stated simply, illustrated her anxiety and concern for the future: "What am I going to do?"

Speaking about her experiences in high school evoked a strong response from Jayne. A diagnosis of a severe learning disability had left Jayne feeling at the mercy of teachers and their assumptions that she would never be successful, academically, from elementary to senior high school. "They just wanted to assume that I was just stupid and I was lazy to do my work."

Certainly the participants' view of the future from the steps of high school was not overly positive or filled with possibilities. Each young woman was able to assess her individual limitations or identify problematic areas of learning. Had these young women experienced enough successes on which to build a plan for their futures?

Explaining their choice of early childhood development as an area of study, each of the research participants described work they had already done in this field. Initially, it appeared that the basis for making the decision arose from previous work or life experiences with children: baby-sitting, teaching skating, being a parent, assisting a play therapist in a hospital, observing graduates of the early childhood program in a nursery, or volunteering in a day care. The power of these learning experiences, external to the formal school environment, would appear to affirm what constitutes meaningful learning for young women. They each had lived or worked with children and found personal satisfaction in such work. They "knew" what they wanted for a career. Or did they?

When probed about their choice of a college program, the participants provided interesting responses. A barrier, grades, kept Emma and Amanda from pursuing their first choice of studies, in journalism and marine biology, respectively. Jennifer saw the early childhood program, as one step on the path towards her future goal of being an elementary teacher. Early childhood training was Tylare's stated first choice of education, but equally as interesting to her were law enforcement, social work and interior decorating. Sarah saw the early childhood program offering her knowledge that would enable her to "raise [my] son the best that I can," while allowing her to "go on to many different things after early childhood." Jayne was the only participant whose first choice of study was clearly early childhood development: "I always wanted to work with children . . . I associate better with younger kids."

Questions still remained about the decisions being made by these women. Why training in early childhood development? Was familiarity with a job such a powerful influence on a young woman's future decisions? How was the decision made to enter this program? From the interviews it quickly became apparent the significant role parents play, especially mothers, in knowing their daughters and being able to provide clarity and guidance to the decision-making process, and encouraging their further education.

Amanda's and Jennifer's mothers noted what their daughters were "good at," and that they got "along really well with kids." Mothers gave direction, "this is the way you should go" Jennifer indicated that her mother told her, eliminating any sense of confusion or insecurity. Sometimes parental approval of a daughter's choice of study was subtler: "when I suggested [entering the early childhood program]," Sarah said, "[my mother] was really excited about it, she thought it would be really neat." Emma's mother played a

pivotal role by providing a picture of what to avoid--poorly paid employment--and what to acquire: "always, always saying, to get your college diploma, or even a certificate."

Authorities influencing a choice of study could also be external to one's family. The approval for Tylare's decision came from others who really knew the young woman and told her "Tylare, you really, this would be awesome and you would do really well," and "you have to work with kids because you just have to." Jayne identified that her high school living skills teacher, "was able to tell me [the ECD program] was something for me that I could be good at . . . he was really focused on what, like, my career could be."

Looking for the right answer of career choice, and for guidance, these six young women sought direction from the authorities in their lives. The authorities had status and were able to see the young women more clearly than they could see themselves. Uncertain as they were of themselves academically, and of the choice of an area of study, each young learner stated with certainty that the right job for her was working with children: "you are doing something for a cause, or for the children you're making a difference," stated Amanda. Sarah spoke with certainty regarding her decision: "I just feel that I need to be with kids." Jennifer saw that "We're always going to need people to sculpt children, to bring them up and things like that."

Asked to speak on their first year in college, participants quickly identified the negative aspects of this experience. Even with assurance of an authority figure, or a choice of studies believed to be personally meaningful, entry into college significantly impacted the young women. Jayne spoke of needing long periods of time to "sleep off" her stress. Living for the first time in an urban setting Amanda had to face bouts of loneliness, homesickness, and the "noises in [her] apartment." Emma's first year in

college was "Hell. I had a tough time doing it. I found my ambition wasn't there. That I didn't, you know, want to do it. Couldn't do it!" Enduring two "breakdowns," Emma saw herself "Going through really, changes and I had to make decisions . . . it was just too overwhelming. And I just didn't want to, I just didn't want to come [to college]." Tylare and Jennifer expressed strong feelings of loss in leaving behind childhood and having nothing in common with peers and friends. Jennifer believed, as well, that "moving up" to college created an expectation that she would have to grow up, leaving behind a sense of freedom and playfulness.

Sarah, as a single parent, was overwhelmed by the dual responsibilities of home and school. Days were filled with early awakenings, travel time to college and childcare, household duties, and finding time to study. Balancing all of the demands in her life severely challenged Sarah: "I knew it would be hard but I didn't know it would be that hard . . . [spending] every single waking moment . . . either being with my son and being a student. And not being myself . . .."

The first year in college did generate positive feelings and offer positive experiences to the young women. Participants were quick to identify that they "learned a lot"--especially in child development classes. Perhaps this course of study allowed the young learners to explore their own childhood and to speak from the knowledge gained from personal life experiences. The second area that excited the learners was the field placement practicums enabling the women "to see that those things in class do work." The women could see the match between the theoretical studies and the practical application of their newfound knowledge.

As the young women continued to speak, they began to reflect, looking back over their first-year experiences. Each woman began to describe her personal journey and, increasingly, the personal connection she was making to her own learning. Certainly the words of these young women reflect their growing awareness of themselves as learners--successful learners. "It means I'm actually doing something with my life" Jayne stated, and "I [get] more out of knowing what I'm going to do career-wise." Tylare's enthusiasm for her year and changes in self-perception were very apparent: "You are learning for yourself . . . I feel more like I'm learning for me. College is . . . your future and what you want to do in life." Amanda's understanding of her process of change was more tentative. She had made many important adjustments in coming to college, but it was her emotional well being that was of personal importance: "I've changed a lot in how I view life. I'm usually more happy."

Gaining a sense of control and self-direction, Jennifer articulated the changes she had undergone: "I'm looking at my future more, like I think it's the future more. I'm finally into something that I enjoy . . . But now it's my turn to choose what I want to do." In describing herself, as a learner, Jennifer was able to reflect on her growth over time: "I see myself as someone higher, like moving up . . . I feel more mature . . . I think it's more serious than how I did before."

Emma's year reflected her personal struggle, but as well, her growing awareness of herself as a learner: "That I can learn. That's a big one. That I can actually, you know, somebody puts something in my brain and it can actually stay there . . . I can learn [laugh]. I can learn, I can learn!" When asked to speak more about her new feelings as a

learner, Emma said "knowing that I could achieve something. I believe is pretty new . . . like in a school setting, this achieving thing is a big thing, here. It's really new."

Discussion

The words of these young women clearly show the steps taken in the transition from secondary to postsecondary education as they sought independence, identity, and intimacy. High school and adolescent experiences left the young women expressing self-doubt, questioning academic capabilities, and feeling uncertain about the future. Each seemed ill prepared to accept or address the challenges that lay ahead as they entered the first year of postsecondary education.

The literature on motivation for young adults' participation in education tells us that they are driven by the desire for training or education that will lead to work or a job--"professional advancement." Second motivation is "external expectations . . . the individual is complying with the suggestions or requirements of someone else" (Houle, as cited in Darkenwald, 1984, p. 17). While all of the young women knew they would need more education and eventually, a job, direction from an external source was required to discover an area for education or training and direction as to what they were "good at."

Initially, as "received knowers" (Clinchy, 1994, p. 119) each young woman relied on an authority, parents or some other person, for knowledge about herself--an external truth found in the words of the important people in her life. Knowledge received in this way, externally, is ingested but not created or evaluated by the receiver. It is noted that this position (Belenky et al., 1986) is frequently held by very young adult students just beginning their college careers listening to others, seeking direction, so that they will do the right thing.

Socialization of the women to a female caretaking role likely occurred over their short (to date) lifetime, reinforced by previous work experiences or the modelling provided within the family. Knowledge of a familiar job may also offer relief and a sense of purpose to the young women in making decisions, decisions that received the approval of a parent or a respected authority. As well, women who are recipients of knowledge from others, from perceived authorities, "feel quite comfortable with advancing themselves, only if it is quite clear that self-advancement is also a means of helping others" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 47).

Learning, as a first-year experience, is at times 'burdensome, unpleasant, or even frightening" (Darkenwald, 1984, p. 22), creating the "anxiety experienced by many beginning students" (Daloz, 1986, p. 31). Such unsettling emotion leaves the young learner emotionally vulnerable but the potential for growth increases. As Daloz, (as cited in Clark, 1993) states in his writings on the transformational powers of education, "growth is a risky and frightening business, much like a journey into the unknown" (p. 49). The learner has been challenged to face the unknown--with the unknown often being herself.

Each of these women had begun the process of clarifying her personal values. College has impacted them: creating the possibility of change. As they spoke they developed new ideas about their identities, heard their voices aloud, and tested the waters to see how they had changed and how they would appear to themselves and to others. By hearing their voices it becomes apparent that the source of knowledge originates from within, as "subjective knowers" (Clinchy, 1994, p. 119), knowledge derived from firsthand, personal experiences.

An examination of the text of the young women's words shows that the language suddenly shifts as they describe and reflect on the end of their first year in college, and their personal motivation and sense of involvement in their own learning. A new reality appears, to enable us to see and know "that which is true, that is, that which has reality" (Ashton, 1994, p. 365) and thus, the use of the metaphor "getting a life."

This new reality, of "getting a life," is a phenomenon reflected in the responses of the young women as they described their experiences after completion of the first year in college. Jennifer's comments act as a pivotal moment, causing us to look again at the changes she experienced: "I knew at the beginning of the year I was pretty negative. . . . But I think how I just turned around. To be, to make everything positive. . . . A step in my life that, you know."

Each young woman had become more exploratory in her orientation to differing values, lifestyles, and job or career possibilities. Belenky et al. (1986) note this phenomenon as the subjective knowers' "quest for self," and in a young person, as "an adolescent push for freedom from oppressive or stagnant parental and community influences" (p. 77). Possibilities are being created.

Brook (1985) noted that in career decision making, one of the most important factors is "knowledge of self . . . derived from clarifying personal and work values" (p. 139). Each of these participants actively sought to clarify what was of value: what is personally meaningful. Initially, the choice of training was based on the perspectives of others as to what a young woman was "good at." The motivating force appeared to be largely parental selection, as opposed to self-selection, of a traditional career.

After a year in college the women had begun to acquire skills linked to a specific job and had experienced a more immediate form of vocationalism, as identified by Gaskell (1985) that attempted "to bring the relations and the content of work inside the classroom" (p. 220). Training in early childhood development will translate into a job for those who acquire a college diploma. At the end of year one, they had begun to explore alternatives to their area of study.

Knowledge of occupational alternatives is the second factor in career decision-making (Brook, 1985, p. 139) and while these young women focused on female-gender work roles, exploration of other occupations had begun. Jennifer's college experiences led her to expand her career considerations: pursue a degree in elementary education, administer a day care, or dream ahead, to the possibility of being a child psychologist. Amanda planned to go on to university as well, and then in a more tentative manner she stated "hopefully find a job in kindergarten or grade one." Emma and Tylare planned to begin by working with children. Each also saw a future change of career, perhaps as social workers.

The college environment offers a setting, a community, in which to experience "the natural process of disorientation and reorientation" (Bridges, 1980, p. 5) that is required if a younger young adult is to successfully make the transition into adulthood. The college environment may also be able to create a meeting place, which supports this important transition into adulthood. This transition, in the words of Brown and Gilligan (1992) is "a crossroads in women's development . . . an intersection between psychological health and cultural regeneration" (p. 1).

In response to the question: "What does a woman need to know?" (Belenky et al., 1986), the answer is "that she is capable of intelligent thought" (p. 193). The surprising discovery of being able to think, to engage fully with ideas, became evident in the words of these young women. In their final interviews, they began to construct powerful truths about themselves and to find personal meaning from their experiences in a college program. The college experience afforded them opportunities to think about themselves and the lives they wanted to create.

While initially seeking knowledge of themselves from identified authorities, ultimately they received "confirmation that they could be trusted to know and to learn" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 195). This is a powerful message to be given and to hear, as a first year student. As well, the participants gained a group of women as partners in their learning and career preparation. Two important elements, "confirmation and community," (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 194) provide the basis of further development, as these participants move into year two of the college experience.

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Chapter 3

Hearing Amy's voice: An exemplar of inclusive postsecondary education

(This chapter was submitted to the *Developmental Disabilities Bulletin* for publication)

Preface

In the summer of 1996, Early Childhood Development, a two-year college diploma program, tentatively agreed to consider prospective students from "College Connection"—an on-campus program offering educational opportunities to young adults with developmental disabilities. Through this program students with disabilities, often deemed ineligible for postsecondary education, gain access to college. The intent of the program is to help each student develop "career related skills and aptitudes" and provide "life enriching experiences that would assist in the transition into adulthood and community life" (Weinkauf & Bowman, 1998).

The Early Childhood Development (ECD) program has always been philosophically supportive of inclusion in preschool education, and students and graduates of ECD have numerous practical opportunities to work with children in integrated settings. Inclusion in postsecondary education was a novel idea, but one that we welcomed as an opportunity to explore another aspect of adult education.

Inclusive postsecondary education

Opportunities for participation in postsecondary education for young adults with developmental disabilities has become increasingly recognized as essential to ensure their full participation in community life (Hartman, 1993; McDonald, L., MacPherson-Court, L., Frank, S., Uditsky, B., & Symons, F., 1997; Roeher Institute, 1996; Skinner & Weinkauf, 1997). Just as access to postsecondary education enables young adults to gain

the skills and knowledge that will allow them to assume responsibility for themselves socially and economically, so too do individuals with disabilities desire to have the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers (Bowman & Skinner, 1994; Panitch, 1988; Biersdorff, K., Bowman, P., & Weinkauf, T., 1997).

Educational opportunities for learners with developmental disabilities in preschool, elementary and secondary education have long had the support of educators, parents, and the larger community. A person with a developmental disability leaves secondary schooling and generally finds "limited options" (Panitch, 1988, p. 29) await them: a sheltered workshop, segregated vocational training, or perhaps employment requiring minimal skills. Bowman and Skinner (1994) suggest that without the option of postsecondary education, a young person with a developmental disability is denied the "natural pathway into adulthood" (p. 47): the time and setting where a young person learns what it means to be an adult and explore future options.

Inclusive postsecondary education is defined as a "system in which individual talents, capacities and aspirations are fostered. It is a system in which these differences are acknowledged without the student being segregated or condemned" (Roeher Institute, 1996, p. 2). Students, disabled and non-disabled together in a college or university setting, are exposed to a wide range of academic and social experiences, face new challenges, and meet new friends. What do we know of this unique period in a young person's life?

Entry into adulthood is often viewed as a time of new beginnings, newfound freedoms, and endless possibilities. Young adulthood, as defined by Darkenwald and Knox (1984) is that portion of the life span, from ages "sixteen or seventeen to

approximately age thirty-four" (p. 100). Merriam (1984b) has characterized this period of life as having its "own unique constellation of psychological issues and sociocultural tasks," and it is the clustering of these individual issues and tasks during young adulthood that sets this stage of adulthood apart from other stages" (p. 3).

Psychologically, young adults are seeking to resolve issues surrounding the "internal concerns" (Darkenwald & Knox, 1984, p. 101) of independence, identity, and intimacy. The resolution of each issue will be on an individualized basis and the rate at which changes occur [is] "a product of an individual's total personality, lifestyle and subculture" (Schroeder, 1992, p. 385). Sociocultural tasks enable the young adult to achieve the "social behavior appropriate to the culture" (Merriam, 1984b, p. 7). Adult status sets expectations in place that one will choose an occupation, establish an intimate relationship, and start a family: tasks traditionally associated with maturity.

Theories of psychological development have been applied to the transition into young adulthood. Erikson identified two age-related concerns: resolutions of the dilemma between identity versus role confusion, ages 13-18; an intimacy versus isolation, ages 19-25 (as cited in Bee & Mitchell, 1984, p. 384). A young person begins to consider the future and forms an identity based on sexual, occupational, and ideological identities. Levinson identified the "early adult transition," ages 17-22 (Bee, 1996; Schroeder, 1992) as the stage in which a young person begins to question, change or may end "existing relationships with important persons, groups, institutions; to reappraise and modify the self that formed in it" (Levinson, as cited in Schroeder, 1992, p. 385). Leaving adolescence, a young person establishes a "sense of identity separate from one's family of origin" (Levinson, as cited in Merriam, 1984a, p. 7). Loevinger explores stages of ego

development in adults: stages that are "sequential and cumulative, not inevitable" (Bee, 1996, p. 59). The "conformist" stage of ego development relates to adolescent development and the "conscientious" stage reflects the identity formation of young adults (Bee, 1996; Merriam, 1984a). The conformist adheres to societal norms and expectations while the conscientious stage sees an adult increasing self-awareness and exploration of life's possibilities.

The relevance of many of the theorists of adult development has been questioned with regard to women (Bee, 1996; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Merriam, 1984a). Research conducted mainly by men with largely male samples does not reflect women's experiences nor allow for a complete picture of human development. A female's identity is formulated more in connection to others, and separation from families is more gradual than for males, as studies show.

Josselson (1987) explored identity formation with senior women in colleges and universities. While Erikson saw identity formation as the adolescent seeking to establish a separate identity, independent of parents, Josselson found that for adolescent females interpersonal competence was more important than autonomy. Young adults achieving independence was also examined by Sheehy (1974); "pulling up roots" (p. 32) marks the first step towards independence for 18-22 year olds. Sheehy (1974) noted that while males express the need to separate and establish their identity, females most often seek attachment, realizing their identity through others, especially through marriage (p. 78).

Awareness of women's cognitive and ethical development arose from the narratives of women's lives. Gilligan (1982) heard in women a "different voice" (p. 2) expressed in a care model concerned with connections and attachments between people.

Belenky et al. (1986, p. 18) explored women's use of the "metaphor of voice": the intertwining of voice, mind and self. Appreciation for women's development leads to support for the preference of learners for connected knowing: "to think with someone than think against someone" (Clinchy, 1994, p. 123).

For a woman with a disability, finding her voice often means addressing the double barriers of gender and disability. Historically society has devalued people with disabilities, seeing them as less than human, requiring institutionalization, and facing marginalization. As society has slowly evolved to seeing the value in diversity, we have increasingly heard the voices of women and, gradually, the voices of women with disabilities. Lisi (1993) states "it is a struggle to be heard. It is a struggle to hear your own voice when the experience you bring to the world is not one that others share" (p. 198). For women with disabilities, making connections and attachments with others may require even greater effort to overcome their sense of isolation and separateness.

Methodology and participants

Ethnography is the choice of methodology when exploring a particular group of women to discover what they do and know—their culture (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). As Agar (as cited in Boyle, 1994) noted, an ethnographer is engaged in a process "to learn about or understand some human group" (p. 161). This approach afforded the opportunity to learn from the participants' perspectives of reality: the emic perspective (Morse & Field, 1995, p. 26).

The question in this study was "What influence does college have on young adult women in the transition from school-to-work?" The critical element was to hear the voices of the youngest participants in the learning environment. As well, it is important to

understand a young woman's reality as she makes this important transition of a youth moving into adulthood, "a process rather than an arbitrary event in one's life" (Galaway & Hudson, 1996, p. XIV).

The participants chose to study early childhood development, a college program leading to a two-year diploma. Studies in this program foster skill development and the knowledge to work with the youngest children in our society. Graduates learn to accept the challenges associated with providing quality care; to establish partnerships with families to provide this care; to view each child as a unique human being; to gain an appreciation for people with diverse lifestyles, values, cultural backgrounds, ethnic origins, religious beliefs; and to foster healthy living habits. Students learn developmentally appropriate childcare practices in four field placement practicums.

The original study addressed five questions: how the participants' high school experiences prepared the young women for college, the choice of their specific area of study (early childhood education), a significant person that encouraged further education, how they knew early childhood was the right program for them, and last, their first year college experiences. In this case study I will focus on three areas: the participant's relationship with learning, with a new peer group, and her initial explorations of future work options. The decision to focus solely on these areas is based on a discovery made after a semi-structured interview had been conducted with Amy. Quickly it became apparent that some questions evoked more of a response from her than did others. Perhaps they were more meaningful questions; certainly, she was verbally more expressive discussing these three areas.

The other complication to the interview process was Amy's tendency to offer a nodding head to affirm agreeable responses to my questions or comments. I brought this behavior to her attention by joking that the tape recorder was having a hard time recording her answers when she just nodded her head. Amy laughed, but it was obvious that I would have to carefully pursue answers so as not to overwhelm Amy or leave her feeling badgered by the interview process. I wanted Amy to feel valued as a contributor to my learning and to experience the interview process positively.

Three sources of data inform this study. Analysis of the interview conducted at the end of Amy's first year in college was one source of data. Fieldnotes, an additional source of data, documented the prolonged, direct contact with the participant. As participant-observer, the fieldnotes described the weekly classroom visits I conducted over a period of eight months in the young woman's child development classes. An additional source of data was my direct experiences with this young woman during her year in college.

Participants, 17-20 years of age, enter college as "Stage 1" adults or "younger young adults—persons in their late teens and early twenties," as defined by Darkenwald & Knox (1984, p. 100). Rather than viewing them as too young or immature, it is important to see this transition through their eyes. Amy (as a self-selected participant, she chose a new name to protect her identity) provides invaluable insights about her journey into adulthood. In the findings only Amy's experiences of the transition into adulthood are discussed: her relationship with learning, with a new peer group, and her initial explorations of future work options.

Findings

Initially, life in the classroom is impacted by previous experiences accompanying the young adult into college. As a special education student, Amy was enrolled in the Integration Occupational Program of her local high school. Academically capable, Amy was identified as the "teacher's pet" in high school, and this was a source of personal pride: "I always get good marks, better marks than anybody else—I'm always the highest." On the other hand Amy received negative comments from her peers about her status as "teacher's pet," stating their dislike for her: "you're teacher's pet and you stop doing that!"

High school had also offered Amy a course in child and health care, which had taught her about health and safety issues for young children. Work experience in two community daycare centres had allowed Amy to explore work in a preschool setting. Therefore, entry into college was a positive event, and auditing courses in the early childhood program confirmed for Amy that she had made the right choice—"to become a good quality professional daycare worker."

Amy was aware that she was in a unique situation as a student in the "College Connection" program. She would take her courses at a slower pace with a reduced workload, would audit courses, and would have access to a person who would provide additional academic support. Amy also knew that without "College Connection" there would have been no way for her to continue her education after high school. Without access to college Amy stated that she would just be "going swimming and walking her dog each day." While these activities were "okay," her preference was to be in college: "I like going to school, it's fun. I learn new things."

Initially Amy found the new college environment to be very disorienting: "Weird for me. Strange. Going to this big, big college. More floors, more classes." By the end of the first year, Amy felt that she was fully familiar with the college and she could access anything that she required: classrooms, library, instructors' offices, computer lab, cafeteria, or recreation facilities.

When asked to describe what had been the most interesting part of being in college, Amy quickly identified "the teachers, meeting all these new teachers." As we continued to explore what this meant to her, Amy described her teachers as having "different levels of patience, …less and less patience" with her. Amy's smile and laughter accompanied this comment, so further clarification was sought. The indication for Amy that her instructors were not patient with her was found in the narrative comments they made on her assignments, comments such as "this is missing, or that's missing, or you need to expand it more." The following question was posed to Amy: "So is that a sign that they are less patient with you or are they saying 'we know you can do more'?" Without any hesitation Amy responded, "Um, it's 'we know that you can do more'."

Instructors also supported Amy in the classroom and helped her to feel more comfortable: "Me [sic] going into groups. Encouraging me into groups and to work in groups." As well, instructors encouraged Amy to move away from working on assignments in classes and to focus more on the learning tasks at hand. Instructors also had to learn how to facilitate Amy's participation in classes when problems arose for her. Amy, being very task oriented, would occasionally become upset when an activity she wished to do was selected or given to another student or group of students. After

thoughtful discussions between Amy and her instructors, strategies were identified to enable her to express her strong emotional responses without disrupting the classes or placing Amy or the instructor in potentially embarrassing situations.

Equally important to all of Amy's instructors was that classmates hear her and allow her contributions to influence the learning environment. Amy's enthusiasm for learning was always evident in her playfulness, energetic responses, laughter and active participation in all classroom tasks. In a group presentation one of Amy's classmates had assumed a leadership role and was trying get all of the members organized and to agree to her plan for presenting the content. Amy was in agreement but wanted to make her contribution to the presentation by reading a preschool picture book appropriate to the topic to her classmates. The group leader remained firm and explained that there would not be time for reading the book. As the moment in the presentation arose for Amy to make her contribution, she pulled the book from behind her and began to read to her audience. As she completed the story she looked over to her group members and smiled and the presentation proceeded. We had heard from Amy, but her group members had also learned that Amy's ideas needed to be seriously considered and valued.

Amy was very aware of the personal changes she had experienced in her year in the college: "learning, about new stuff that I haven't learned about kids before" was at the top of her list of changes. As well she was able to connect classroom learning to her field placement practicums: "learning each goals [tasks required of each student in each level of field placement practicums] that I need to work on, for each field placement—[to] see if it's a good daycare or not." Amy also felt that she had been accepted by her classmates "They just got to know me and say 'Hi'." This acceptance also extended to a severe

dietary restriction Amy is required to follow. Eating in social or public situations tempts Amy to eat prohibited foods. She brought this issue to the interview and identified how she had been able to ask a classmate to help her in a restaurant in choosing appropriate foods and how they had agreed that Amy "can't have desserts." Amy was able to reach out to a classmate and to problem-solve a situation that regularly created difficulties for her.

Not only was Amy the recipient of assistance from classmates, she was also able to offer support to a fellow classmate in the "College Connection" program. When her classmate expressed fears about participating in early childhood classes, Amy offered her words of support: "I know it's new for you. I know you haven't been in early childhood, but it's okay. You go in there and have a good time."

Being enrolled in an early childhood diploma program creates the expectation in the student that in time there will be an ending, a point of completion, and the graduate will move on into the world of work. For Amy the point of completion has not been predetermined, and there is ongoing exploration of her potential as a learner and as a future worker. When asked to speak about her future, Amy quickly responds with the hope that she can "be a daycare worker and [be] a Mom." Amy's dreams for the future are similar to those of her peers, but she acknowledges the reality that many of the required college courses are academically too demanding for her. When asked about this situation, Amy expressed no sense of sadness or disappointment but responded, "I feel okay if I don't get the courses that are too hard for me. What I need to learn is about the children …the proper procedures how to care for them."

As the interview was coming to a close, Amy smiled and said, "It's been a great year for me."

Discussion

Entry into college offered Amy a novel learning opportunity that was no less important because of her disability. Her transition into adulthood was facilitated by the normalizing experiences of being a young person in a college, in an identified field of study and learning with age-appropriate peers. With access to the community college, Amy's sense of community broadened as opposed to narrowing.

Inclusive education in a college classroom offers a setting, a community, in which to experience "the natural process of disorientation and reorientation" (Bridges, 1980, p. 5) that is required if a younger young adult is to successfully make the transition into adulthood. Certainly Amy experienced some initial disorientation in the college environment and one can only surmise that this was probably true with her classroom experiences as well.

"College Connection" created a point of entry to the college classroom for Amy that allowed her access to many of the benefits of inclusive education. Uditsky & Kappel (1988) identified inclusive postsecondary education as offering numerous benefits to learners: development of new relationships, participation in an activity valued by society, enhanced self-esteem, and improved employment possibilities; moreover, "normative and challenging expectations help to prepare people for challenges …to be participating community members" (p. 24).

Amy's "great year" gave her the opportunity to move beyond earning grades for teacher approval to discovering that she was expected to do more in her learning tasks

and could do so, successfully. Amy's potential as a learner became more evident as she moved from learning in a special education program to living and learning in an inclusive college environment. Her "stronger sense of self" (Bowman & Skinner, 1994, p. 50) enabled her to see herself positively as a capable learner and as an adult. Amy was able to hear instructors' feedback and rely on the instructors for direction—to focus on in-class learning and aid in the resolution of classroom problems in a positive and thoughtful manner. Instructors aided Amy in her growing self-confidence and sense of belonging in the classroom.

For most people with developmental disabilities "integrated education programs in which adults can learn from and interact with their peers are almost non-existent" (Boyle, Rioux, Ticoll & Felske, 1988, p. 10). Opportunities for being a part of a "real community" (Frank & Uditsky, 1988, p. 40) are often lacking. We can hear in Amy's words her enthusiasm for being with her peers and learning to work with them. In learning with them Amy benefits from the group's modeling, but as well she experiences a sense of support and connection.

Amy gains from her connections with others—instructors and classmates. A growing sense of interpersonal competence allows her to support a classmate, firmly make a contribution to the learning of others, and to ask a friend for help in solving a personal problem. As an emerging young adult Amy demonstrates the social skills she will require in her personal and work life.

Young people desire independence, explore possibilities, and seek the right to make their own decisions. An occupation is key to fulfilling future plans and dreams. Amy appears to be preparing for her place in the workforce. Not seeking just any job,

Amy has identified her future work to be with children and acquiring the knowledge that will enable her to care for them.

In conclusion, we have examined Amy's experiences in an inclusive postsecondary classroom, but what of her classmates? How might they have benefited from Amy's participation in their learning? Certainly each student will have observed the diversity of capabilities to be found in any group of people, whether in a college or in the larger community. An intangible benefit would be a growing tolerance for those different from ourselves and perhaps, in time, an increase in the value we place on each other. Ultimately students would experience an educational institution modeling an ""enabling equality" (Roeher Institute, 1996) a recognition of the "differences among students [while] providing equal benefit and opportunity to all people" (p. 7).

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Chapter 4

Research presentations—learning with others

(Six presentations to conferences and professional bodies)

Underlying my desire to return to university was my need to more clearly understand the events that I witnessed daily in the college classroom. I fully accepted my responsibility for teaching a required curriculum and offering the women who entered my classroom a supportive learning environment. I remained puzzled and troubled, though, by my seeming inability to connect in a meaningful way with the youngest members in the classroom. After a great deal of thought and numerous discussions with previous graduates of the Early Childhood Development program at Grant MacEwan Community College I began to realize that I did not know the learners sitting in my courses. I had never found a way to overcome the barrier of silence that seemed so formidable and which deprived us from learning with each other.

I discovered that I truly cannot teach those whom I do not know. Engagement is essential for my own learning, and I wanted to find a way to engage with the young women. As I began to read and reflect on learners and learning, the writings of Daloz (as cited in Clark, 1993) seemed particularly meaningful: "growth is a risky and frightening business, much like a journey into the unknown" (p. 49). The time had arrived for me to begin my journey into the unknown, to return to an academic environment, and to engage in the risk-taking behaviour that I routinely encouraged of the young adults who entered the Early Childhood Development program.

Once I had heard from the research participants and observed them in the classroom I wanted to speak with adult educators; to discover what their experiences had

been in facilitating the learning of young adults. Accompanying this desire to hear from others was the knowledge that I needed to increase my personal comfort in speaking as an adult educator, sharing ideas, and continuing to clarify my understanding of the young adult in a postsecondary environment.

Teaching colloquium—Grant MacEwan Community College

In March, 1998, I made the first presentation of my research *Getting a life: A metaphor for growth for first year students* in a teaching colloquium to colleagues in Grant MacEwan Community College. I wanted to hear what unique challenges young adults may have presented to other adult educators in their teaching. I also began to explore how to identify and present the key elements of my research.

Two main concerns with teaching young adults were expressed in the discussions with my colleagues. The first concern was the lack of passion for learning exhibited by young adults and the accompanying lethargy that learners brought to learning tasks. Schmier (1995) identifies the lethargic learner as disabled by "learning dependency" (p. 21), an affliction that robs young people of "intellectual and emotional excitement, drive, energy, purpose and meaning" (p. 21). Some learners no longer believe that they are intellectually capable of being successful in a classroom. Perhaps the lethargic, dispassionate learners found in some classrooms are only protecting themselves until they can determine whether they are in a safe learning environment. While some learners have never had the opportunity to discover their learning capabilities, others remain uncertain as to why they are in the classroom or if they even have the motivation to learn.

The second concern participants shared was the struggle to maintain standards, address student performance, and still build a caring relationship within the classroom. I

had the opportunity to hear in their words some of the trying aspects of teaching that puzzles adult educators.

As a participant-observer I am fully aware of the reluctant or indifferent learner. The transformation to a capable learner requires time, effort, and engagement—but never indifference from the adult educator. Adult education provides the opportunity to begin again, to build a new relationship between learner and educator. Daloz (1986) has identified as the aim of adult education the *"development* of the whole person--rather than knowledge acquisition," and, the "central element of teaching [then] becomes the provision of *care* rather than use of teaching skills or transmission of knowledge" (p. XVII). "Teaching with hearts wide open" (Schmier, 1995, p. 101) allows adult educators to set expectations for learners while letting each learner know that he or she is a unique and meaningful person. Ericksen (as cited in Scholl-Buckwald, 1985) has pointed out that every student walks into the classroom on the first day with four key questions, one of which is "Will he or she [the teacher] care about me?" (p. 14). Thoughtful adult educators have the ability to develop caring, supporting, and challenging interactions with young adult learners.

Presentation to Alberta colleges with early childhood programs

I wanted to speak with other adult educators, who, as I do, train and educate young adults in early childhood development programs. In April 1998, I presented my research to representatives from eight of the ten community colleges in Alberta offering certificate and diploma programs in Early Childhood Development.

As I presented my research and shared the young women's personal narratives, knowing smiles and nodding heads showed me that the participants understood my

findings. Everyone knew learners like these young learners and the challenges they present in a college classroom. Together we explored our role in supporting young adults' consideration of other fields of study or career possibilities different from our own. Some of the participants, as administrators of college programs, expressed concerns regarding institutional policies focused largely on the number of graduates per program rather than on fostering student decision-making or personal growth.

Child Care Conference—Edmonton , Alberta

Grant MacEwan Community College in Edmonton, Alberta annually presents the Child Care Conference for staff and administrators of programs who offer care and education for young children. My presentation entitled *Hiring Early Childhood Development graduates: A time of growth and change* was intended for administrators of child care programs hiring the newly graduated young adult.

I shared with the workshop participants the voices of the young women describing the decision-making process they went through before entering the Early Childhood Development program, the personal discoveries they made, and their hopes and dreams for the future. I also had the opportunity to suggest possible strategies for working effectively with newly graduated young adult employees.

Young adults entering the workplace, often for the first time in their lives, are eager, energetic and filled with the ideals of our profession. However, working with young children on a full-time basis, the new graduates' primary focus during the first year out of college is on "survival" (Katz, 1977, p. 7).

On the other hand, employers desperate for qualified staff seek to hire mature, capable individuals who can readily assume full responsibility for the care of children,

create warm and supportive relationships with families, and provide a quality program that nurtures all aspects of a child's development. The reality of the workplace and employer expectations can quickly overwhelm the new graduate who may be asking herself, "Can I really do this kind of work day after day?"

Heath (1998) speaks of matching students' personal attributes to both educational programs and the workplace. His query is whether students "have an adequate knowledge concerning the career path which they have chosen or a clear understanding of how their own abilities, attitudes and expectations match either the course or the intended profession" (p. 119). Heath's concern is valid when considering the expectations of graduates of Early Childhood Development and the reality of a workplace placing heavy demands on the caregiver while offering low rates of pay and high levels of stress.

Administrators or managers of childcare programs must be prepared to examine their role and that of the workplace, in encouraging the continued growth of employees. Rutman and Boisseau (1995), in the *Caregiving as Women's Work Project*, explored the "notion of power and its relationship to caregiver's well-being and quality of working life" (p. 23). Women caring for children or the elderly experienced a sense of self-efficacy and, in turn, powerfulness in situations where "they were able to recognize and value their own skills, capacities and experiences; their skills and knowledge were valued by others; and they were able to share their knowledge and skills to assist others (p. 24).

Administrators of pre-school programs know it is unrealistic to expect that they will create ideal work environments for new employees. An effective administrator, though, wanting to secure knowledgeable staff and maintain the integrity of the childcare program, will make the staff and their ongoing growth and development a priority. If

women caregivers, whether young or older, are to remain in this profession, then administrators must support and foster the skills that enable these caregivers to feel effective and valued in the workplace.

In-service to the Legal Assistant Program, Edmonton, Alberta

In May 1998, I was invited to be a guest speaker, providing an in-service session to the Legal Assistant program, in a community college. The program staff described classroom behaviours by their adult learners similar to those that I had observed and experienced in the classrooms of the Early Childhood Development program. They described young women who appeared disengaged from learning, uninterested in course content, and unmotivated to learn.

I do no think that the workshop participants believed that what I was presenting was relevant to the problems they were experiencing with their first year, all female learners. I presented through my research in the young women's personal narratives of their negative secondary schooling experiences, the role of a significant person helping each woman determine a future direction, and the discovery of personal capabilities as a learner. I did not try to convince the listeners of the relevance of my work but rather tried to understand what they were seeing and hearing in their classrooms. I know how personally meaningful it was for me, as a participant-observer, to see students working with a different instructor exhibit behaviours similar to those that I had experienced in my teaching.

All that I could hope for from this presentation was to create an opportunity to openly discuss life in the classroom and begin to discover what the reality was for each of these adult educators. MacKeracher (1993) offers us this insight about the learning

environment and some women learners: "[they] learn most effectively in settings which involve connecting what one is learning to one's own experience, establishing connections with other learners, and focusing on a collective or collaborative perspective even in individualized learning situations" (p. 77). Perhaps by initiating some of these strategies this group of adult educators will discover a process that will enable them to hear the voices of the young women in their classes.

Through the research and presentations that I have done it is my hope that I have been able to increase the visibility of young women and young adult learners within my educational institution. I now know that each learner has personal strengths and must be seen as an individual. I want a young person to be viewed as a positive presence within any learning environment.

Lilly Conference on College & University Teaching Northwest, Portland, Oregon

When I entered graduate studies I saw myself as an early childhood educator—that was my area of professional expertise. I did not see myself as an adult educator. Over time, with repeated opportunities to engage with my research, to dialogue with others, and to write and reflect on my work, I know that I am an adult educator. It seemed appropriate, then, to move beyond my personal comfort level—beyond my local college and community. I also wanted to seek out a more academically oriented audience with which to share my research and to consider the implications for teaching young adult learners. In October 1998, I presented at the Lilly Conference on College & University Teaching Northwest in Portland, Oregon.

Educational Liaison Association of Alberta, Banff, Alberta

Another audience I wanted to reach was within the secondary educational system. Secondary schooling had not been a positive learning experience for the young adult participants in my study. I wanted to more fully understand the reality faced by students in the high school and how the transition to postsecondary schooling was facilitated. In November 1998, I made two presentations to the annual conference of the Educational Liaison Association of Alberta in Banff, Alberta.

The discussions following each of the two presentations led me to believe that this group of secondary school advisors personally knew the young women that I was presenting. Their thoughtful questions and comments helped me to understand that many young women complete high school without a plan for their future. The next important step into adulthood—education leading to future employment—remains an uncertain process and may or may not be supported by the young woman's parents.

The life of a young person is complex, as it is a time for exploring issues surrounding independence, identity and intimacy. The college classroom must create that important environment, a community, in which the first year students can actively resolve developmental issues, and explore future possibilities. The college environment can truly offer a setting in which to experience the "natural process of disorientation and reorientation" (Bridges, 1980, p. 5) required if young adults are to successfully make the transition into adulthood.

Conclusion

Others have truly supported my learning. Each group with which I have spoken has allowed me to share my learning and experiences and, in turn, I have been able to

make invaluable connections with the knowledge and experiences of others. As MacKeracher (1993) has stated, to achieve maturity as learners, "women need to construct their own ideas and opinions, make commitments to an idea or action, develop strategies for defending this choice and for acting congruently with it" (p. 81). I have been provided with so many wonderful dialogues and each has allowed me to bring my ideas forward, construct and reconstruct my knowledge of young adult women, and in turn, allow this new knowledge to transform my work within the college classroom.

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Chapter 5

Teaching young adults in the college classroom

(Monograph in preparation for Grant MacEwan Community College)

Young adults in the college classroom offer adult educators the opportunity to examine their classroom teaching and ability to engage young learners. A proposal to write a monograph on this subject encourages adult educators to read and reflect on their knowledge of young adults and consider the unique needs of this age group. Hopefully, this document can act as a catalyst for a dialogue among educators, enabling them to share and discuss their classroom experiences. It is my intention that the monograph address three areas of importance to adult educators: unique developmental needs of young adults; first year experiences of young adults in the college classroom; and the importance of adult educators creating a dialogue about their work and concerns with first year college learners.

"Younger young adults"—developmental needs

Darkenwald and Knox (1984) have defined "younger young adults—[as] persons in their late teens and early twenties" (p. 100). Young adults enter college seeking education and training, hoping to create future possibilities for themselves. Young adults, psychologically, desire to resolve issues surrounding the "internal concerns" (Darkenwald & Knox, 1984, p. 101) of independence, identity, and intimacy. Entry into adulthood creates a time of new beginnings, new-found freedoms, endless possibilities, and hopefully, the achievement of adult status associated with maturity.

While knowledge of developmental issues is relevant to adult educators, it provides an incomplete picture of the learners who may be seated in the college

classroom and their motivation for being there. As well, other important information about the young learner is revealed over time and only if educators are able to develop a relationship based on mutual trust and respect. Previous life and academic experiences will have created the foundation that educators will be expected to build upon with teaching skills and expertise.

Leaving adolescence, a young person begins the first explorations of the adult world, establishing a "sense of identity separate from one's family of origin" (Levinson, as cited in Merriam, 1984, p. 7). Sheehy (1974) has proposed there are gender differences in how males and females take their first steps towards independence. Sheehy views 18- to 22-year old males "pulling up roots" (p. 32), seeking independence by expressing the need to separate from their families and establish their own identities. Females, in the same age category separate from their family of origin, but generally seek attachment, realizing their identities through others, especially through marriage (p. 78).

Bibby and Posterski (1992), in their national survey of Canadian youth ages 15-19, note that males and females hold significantly different views of their sense of "general competence" (p. 147). Young females today "continue to feel significantly inferior to young males when it comes to general competence" (p. 147) and express strong doubts about personal abilities to do "things well" (p. 147). Many young men and women express a desire to obtain a high school education but "more than three quarters point to school as a source of considerable strain" (Bibby & Posterski, p. 223). Gilligan and associates found that by fifteen years of age, "more than twice as many girls located powerful learning experiences outside of school than inside" (Gilligan, Lyons, Hanmer, 1990, p. 14). It would appear that the end of high school affords young people with new

opportunities but with varying levels of confidence as to their abilities to pursue those possibilities.

First year experiences in the college classroom

All levels of education and all teachers and educators seek to achieve one goal—successful learners. Within the "social context" (Tiberius & Billson, 1991) of each of these environments, learners experience "the entire spectrum of roles, responsibilities, expectations and interactions between students and teachers, and among students" (p. 68). The young learner who appears in the college classroom reflects all his or her previous successes, challenges, and failures. The first-year experiences of college students do matter and can hopefully transform the social context learners associate with their past educational experiences. Steinem (1993) examines the connection between education and personal self-esteem. She encourages those with an education to begin the first step towards self-esteem as "[unlearning]…to demystify the forces that have told us what we *should be* before we can value what we *are*" (p. 109). The adult educator teaching young adults their first year in college can help the students begin this process of discovery.

Spann (as cited in Carriuolo, 1996) has noted that if students "do not form a bond with the college community early in their college experiences, they are likely to drift away" (p. 39). Connection (Tiberius & Billson, 1991), an "ethic of care" (Noddings, 1992, p. 21), "confirmation of…present strengths and future potential" (Hayes, 1989, p. 64) and an emphasis on "character growth" (Schmier, 1995, p. 83) as being more meaningful than academic achievement speak to the relational bond we will want to nurture with young learners. The priorities of educators shift from solely transmitting knowledge to learners to the relational aspects of teaching and learning.

Adult educators creating a dialogue

In 1998, I participated in a conference workshop entitled "Building community using cases about ethical dilemmas in teaching" facilitated by Milton D. Cox, University Director for Teaching Effectiveness Programs at Miami University, Ohio. The session began with each of us working with a partner and sharing an ethical dilemma that had challenged us as educators. From the participants I heard so many of the teaching issues that had often puzzled and troubled me, issues that I had never discussed with anyone. I then knew the source of many of my feelings of isolation, the difficulties I had in identifying specific problems in the classroom, and my inability to voice the concerns I had with the learners in the college classroom. There had never been an opportunity for me to consult with colleagues and to obtain the insights of others on this dilemma. I also began to see that just as I needed to create a community for the learners, I also needed a community for myself—a community for adult educators.

One of Brookfield's (1990) truths about skillful teaching is "to talk to your colleagues" (201). He too identifies as problematic the sense of isolation that develops when educators spend the majority of their time alone in the classroom, and "develop a distorted perception of their own dilemmas, problems, and failings" (p. 201). Having the opportunity to share life in the classroom would benefit not only the educator but also the learner. Just as learners must be courageous on the unknown path of learning, so too must educators.

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Chapter 6

Finding a woman's voice

(Based on an interview and newspaper article)

There were so many surprising elements in my study: the enthusiasm of the research participants; the traditional views they held of their future roles as wives and mothers; and their reliance on authorities, often their mothers, in making future decisions. I know I held the belief, or perhaps an assumption, that in the 1990's the lives of young women had dramatically changed and unlimited choices for education and career options were available to them. I now understood that for young women the decision making process was far more complex and dynamic.

I was delighted by the personal changes that the young women identified after their first year in college. Each woman appeared articulate and able to describe her personal journey and the personal connections she was making to her own learning. Powerful emotions were clearly evident as each young woman spoke; the young women showed enthusiasm, laughter—lots of laughter—a few tears, a sense of strength. As an educator I felt very affirmed in my role in the classroom and in the lives of young adults. I knew I had to communicate my understanding of the young women, and of the importance of their families, to the broader community. I especially wanted to create a dialogue with the many mothers trying to support and guide their daughters into adulthood.

In June 1998, I approached Liane Faulder, a columnist for a local newspaper, the *Edmonton Journal*. I knew Faulder to be a reflective writer keen to address social concerns. We agreed to a date, conducted the interview, and on June 23, 1998 the column

appeared under the heading "No white knights, girls: get a job that pays" (see Appendix F: Newspaper Interview). I wanted to express my concern for young women, acknowledge the choices they faced, and encourage greater dialogue as families made important decisions regarding their daughters' futures.

Concern for young women and their well-being has been well documented. Theorists have noted the wide-ranging effects of lowered self-esteem—on a female's academic performance (Kostash, 1987; Stevenson, 1990), on self-concept (Edwards, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Steinem, 1993), on one's ability to be heard (Gilligan, Lyons, Hanmer, 1990), and on feelings of self-confidence and competence (Orenstein, 1994). Young women face societal dangers and life issues that must be addressed if these women are to develop the personal strengths and feelings of self-worth required to sustain them and allow them to make their personal contributions (Jaffe, 1990; Pipher, 1994). A growing body of literature also documents concern for the health of young women—a holistic view of women's health (Ms. Foundation for Women, 1994; Ms. Foundation for Women, 1998; Tipper, 1997).

Gathering up the dreams and thoughts of the young women with whom I had collaborated and the knowledge gained from readings and reflections, I had to bring my voice—a woman's voice—to other women. What do women need to know about this process of learning with their daughters or the young women in their lives? First, it is okay if they do not have immediate answers or solutions to guide young women. Appreciation for women's development leads to support for the preference of learners for connected knowing; "to think with someone [rather] than think against someone" (Clincy, 1994, p. 123). Women—mothers, daughters, aunts, and thoughtful members of

the community--can begin to think and explore together the possibilities for a young woman's future, a plan for her education or choice of career.

Colten (as cited in Ms. Foundation for Women, 1994) calls for "arenas of comfort...where adolescent girls can feel that it is safe to think, know, feel and take action" (p. 27). Such arenas are places where concerned human beings will listen to a young woman and hear her hopes, dreams and fears. Each young woman must have access to the resources to identify her personal and academic strengths. A young woman may need support and guidance if she is to acquire the skills or knowledge necessary to fulfill her future plans. Concerned adults will want to help each young woman to develop the "habit of thinking about [her] life" (Ms. Foundation for Women, 1998, p. 39). Fine (as cited in Ms. Foundation, 1994) has stated that girls need "a safe free space where [they] can shift positions, 'try on' ways of being women...without getting fixed, silenced, or harassed" (p. 13). Surely older women can create the time and space in their lives, find the energy and thoughtfulness which will enable them to create this important dialogue and process of discovery with the young women that share their lives.

Young women also need to know the reality of the lives of the women that surround them. Girls, adolescents, and young women, while they are trying to make sense of their own lives, are also "studying...us [older women and their mothers] and the quality of our lives" (Ms. Foundation for Women, 1998, p. XVIII). All women live multifaceted lives, make choices, experiences positive and negative aspects of daily living, and achieve personal and professional successes. Women need to share their stories with one another so that their daughters may have the knowledge and the experiences that will enable them to find their own path towards adulthood.

Was I able to create a dialogue? The reactions I heard over my office phone as a result of the newspaper article ranged from a tirade about the incompetence of today's parents to an account from a young medical student who felt brutalized by her educational and work experiences. The response was far too small to determine any patterns between the callers and their opinions, but I appreciated having the opportunity to engage with members of the community and to hear their ideas.

A broader issue for myself, professionally, was the initiation of a dialogue between the community and an educational institution, discussing educational and social issues. As an adult educator I have the ability and the responsibility to act as a catalyst creating such dialogues. Engaging with the community and the media increases the profile of a college while allowing the public to see and hear another perspective on broad social issues.

I am pleased that I was able to take the story of the young women in my study out beyond the walls of the college classroom.

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Chapter 7

College experience on young women as learners

Seven young women allowed us to accompany them on their journey through the first year in college. In their words and through their experiences they have clearly demonstrated the impact college has had on them personally, and as learners. We have been able to gain an appreciation for each young person's journey into adulthood.

In the narratives of these female learners we discover that previous educational experiences, in high school, were of questionable value and left the women unenthusiastic learners, inadequately prepared for college. Early Childhood Development, as a field of study, was generally not their first area of interest. Each young woman had relied on a significant person as a source of "received knowledge" (Clinchy, 1994, p. 119); for knowledge about herself—an external truth found in the words of the important people in her life. Initially, a negative picture was revealed of the young learner's relationship to learning but by the end of the first year of college we discover the positive impact college has had on each of them. It is this change in each learner that needs to be considered by educators.

This concluding chapter is a discussion of and integrates the previous six chapters and contains my reflections as an educator. My thoughts are influenced by the research and relevant literature that has affirmed my learning and knowledge as an educator. The format of each of the previous chapters was dictated by the nature of the material or the constraints imposed by prospective sources, e.g., journal articles, conference presentations.

Reflections on the young adult learner

Too easily educators can view young adults as problematic learners and participants in the college classroom. "Younger young adults—persons in their late teens and early twenties" (Darkenwald & Knox, 1984, p. 100) are often labelled as immature or ill prepared to engage in postsecondary education. While in-class behaviours can be challenging it is essential that educators examine their own role in assisting this age group as learners and in the transition into adulthood. As noted by Doring, Bingham, and Bramwell-Vial (1998) it may be more productive if educators can view this transition to postsecondary education and the accompanying adjustment period "as a developmental period of time…[and] the beginning of a life-long process…of [a young learner] becoming a self-regulated, independent life-long learner" (p. 12). Educators can criticize young adults for their seeming inadequacies or see the first year experiences of students as the ideal period of time to facilitate their development as adults and as learners.

Not wanting to trivialize the challenges that young adults can present in the college classroom, perhaps we should consider teaching strategies that might assist us in working effectively with this age group. *First, it is essential that each learner in the classroom be viewed as an individual.* Having this awareness and acting upon it can enable us to move beyond the beliefs and generalizations that are frequently held about young learners. Stereotypes abound about students who don't want to learn, don't read, and can't write. Sometimes we hear negative comments describing first-year students as "not interested in learning" or as "only interested in a grade." In reality, though, each student has acquired skills, knowledge, and aptitudes that we can capitalize on in our teaching strategies and classroom practices. It is the responsibility of the educator to

discover and recognize the individual strengths that lie within each learner. Bibby and Posterski (1992) encourage educators to look at the way in which we relate to teenagers: "[the] premise of the interaction model is that adult behaviour influences youth behaviour; in turn, teenage behaviour influences adult behaviour. The process is dynamic and ongoing" (p. 191). Postsecondary educators can take heart from the interaction model of adult-teenager behaviour and influence if we can allow ourselves to see the strengths in young learners and realize that we will both be impacted by our relationship.

Bibby and Posterski (1992) have suggested how educators can best meet the needs of young adults. Young people are undergoing a "multidimensional emergence" (p. 192); the inner turmoil that is present as they experience the changes required to "negotiate the difficult passage to full adult status" (Darkenwald & Knox, 1984, p. 104). It would be unrealistic for educators to think that this struggle for identity and independence would not be present in the college classroom. Educators must be sensitive to these developmental issues and appreciate that the young learner is engaged in developmentally important tasks.

A learning environment

The second theme or understanding from this study is that the learning environment for young adults should be "warm and flexible...[and] bear as little resemblance to the structure and social climate of the typical high school as possible" (Darkenwald & Knox, 1984, p. 104). Such a suggestion would enable adult educators to humanize the learning environment and move beyond the external controls commonly used to restrict behaviour in many secondary institutions. Certainly such a setting would enable us to implement one of Bibby and Posterski's (1992) guiding principles: "relate to

me, then teach me" (p. 241). Educators do have choices and can make relationship building a priority. Noting someone's return to class with a "glad to see you back" lets that person know they were missed and their presence is important. Notes on an assignment can reflect not only the criteria for that paper but also acknowledge the student's contributions in class when the content was being discussed. Time for informal chats inside and outside of class allow each of us to reveal a more holistic picture of ourselves as human beings and create a sense of trust.

Diversity in the college classroom

My eyes have been opened to this third consideration and its application to my work with young adults. *The college classroom needs to reflect the diversity of the world in which the young adult will live and work.* We each can contribute to the learning of others if we are open to hearing from each other. As such we want to avoid "age-segregated instruction" (Darkenwald & Knox, 1984) because it "deprives adolescents of adult role models and can result in their feeling stigmatized, thus reinforcing alienation and further undermining self-esteem, motivation, and striving for independence" (p. 105). Nowhere is the value of avoiding age-segregated classrooms more apparent than in the creation of an inclusive postsecondary environment. Academic segregation can also be damaging. A young person who has experienced her education primarily in segregated settings—segregated by academic or intellectual capabilities—will have been deprived of observing the full range of adult behaviours and adult role models. To achieve adulthood a young person with a developmental disability will need to see a wide range of adult role models and their accompanying behaviours so that she might learn to be an adult, too.

Young learners must hear from adult educators what is expected of them. In turn, young learners must know what they can expect from their teachers. It is important that we recognize the "anxiety experienced by many beginning students" (Daloz, 1986, p. 31). The instructor's clearly stated expectations can provide a sense of security as a young learner makes the transition from secondary to postsecondary education. Students need to know that they are "responsible for their own learning, for adhering to reasonable standards of conduct, and for taking initiative in discussing their problems with teachers and counsellors" (Darkenwald & Knox, 1984, p. 104). The adult educator of first-year students will recognize the individual pace with which each young adult will achieve responsibility for his or her own learning and will value that process.

Care in the classroom—building a relationship, building a community

Learning is a highly emotional activity. Learners will resist the risk taking required for learning if they arrive in the classroom ill prepared to learn or if previous learning experiences were personally unsatisfying. Brookfield (1990) has reported that "the emotional sustenance students receive from a supportive learning community is…crucial to their survival" (p. 205). Women, as Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) found, desire "confirmation that they can be trusted to know and learn…[and] community" (p. 194).

First-year experiences for young learners are critical for student success and retention. Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (as cited in Terenzini, Rendon, Millar, Upcraft, Gregg, Jalomo, & Allison, 1996) "argue that the first semester, or even the first six weeks, are critical in determining whether students stay or leave" (p. 43). Educators will need to reflect on the elements required for creating a community for young learners.

Community, in any postsecondary institution, "has to be caring...[and] celebrative" (Boyer, 1992, p. 12). Learners may benefit from a community that "functions as a support network" (Brookfield, 1990, p. 55) offering reassurance to each other as they experience the emotional upheavals associated with adult education. Astin (1993) has stated that successful college programs are able to "form a strong sense of community and peer identification" (p. 417). It is apparent then that educators must attend to this important aspect of their teaching practice and the relationships that are built within the classroom.

Structuring the learning environment so that "learners [can] support each other in a mutual process of personal development and learning" (Hayes, 1989, p. 59) needs to be a priority. Doring, Bingham and Bramwell-Veil (1998) have suggested that initially "the learning process may…have to pre-empt the content coverage" (p. 13) while young adults learn how to learn and gain the "self-regulatory" (p. 13) skills that will enable them to take personal responsibility for their own learning. As young adults go through the transition associated with first-year experiences in a college setting adult educators must be prepared to balance the need to teach knowledge or academic skills and the young learner's need to learn how to be an adult learner. We want to create positive connections between ourselves and young learners so that they are "more likely to feel involved in their educational experience, to be committed to the institution, to have passing grades, and to persist to graduation" (Billson, as cited in Tiberius & Billson, 1991, p. 69).

Upon reflection it would appear that a shift in the emphasis of teaching is required, from content as a priority to teaching as a relationship between educator and learner. This would be consistent with the importance now being placed on the

"validation experiences in a student's successful transition to college" (Terenzini et al., 1996, p. 46) where students have been "recognized by someone important to them (teacher, parent, friend)" (p. 46). Students want to know that they can be successful learners and we already know they also want to be a part of a learning community. Validation for young adults can occur academically or through interpersonal actions.

Validation of learners

Academic validation can occur through a number of common practices—working collaboratively with classmates, instructors or peers giving positive feedback or having academic knowledge or skills recognized. Students, as well, viewed themselves positively as learners in classes "where faculty demonstrated a genuine interest in teaching, were personable and approachable…structured learning experiences that allowed students to experience themselves as capable of learning…created a caring classroom environment…[and] provided frequent and meaningful feedback to students" (Tererzini et al., 1996, p. 61). The educator is able to see and value the individual for his or her present strengths and foster growth towards his or her future potential.

Educators also play a crucial role in the process of validation. Educators will need to take the initiative to demonstrate the care and regard that they hold towards young adults by seeing learners as capable and ensuring that they are accessible to learners both in and out of the classroom. Educators will also value a young adult's active and involved participation in the classroom while acknowledging that it may require time and experience before a young learner may be able to move beyond passivity to active participation in learning situations.

No thoughtful educator will ever dismiss lightly the unique challenges young adults bring to the college classroom. Equally important, though, is to discover the special qualities and capabilities of every learner who enters the classroom door. We have the time and the opportunity to strengthen student-teacher relationships but as well to strengthen our relationships as one caring adult to another.

Awareness of my role as an educator has steadily grown as I have conducted my study. My knowledge of young adults now enables me to see individual strengths while acknowledging the unique challenges each person will bring to the learning relationship. As an educator I have the responsibility and the opportunity to create an environment conducive to learning, where human relationships are valued, and emotionally, to offer learners positive regard and care. In such an environment a sense of community can be discovered where each participant can experience validation and the support required for taking the risks associated with learning.

Summary

A journey is generally defined with a beginning and a point of termination or ending. I struggled to identify the catalyst for the beginning of this journey—beyond the walls of the college classroom to my return to university. At that point I was filled with so many questions and uncertainties about my effectiveness as an educator. I knew that something was wrong for the young women in the classroom but I could not identify it. The fall of 1996, was the marker for beginning this study, entering my role as a researcher, and learning with the young women who chose to be participants. Now in the summer of 1999, this journey is ending, but not my need to continue to learn and explore my role as an educator.

The beginning of each term, the planning for the next course, or those first initial interactions with a new group of learners speak to me of new possibilities and challenges. These common events in the life of an educator have been transformed for me by my opportunity to study with peers and to engage with young learners in the college classroom. Each has given me a new framework for looking at my own role as an instructor and at the relationship I wish to build with the learners. The task now is for me to balance my own ideas, goals, and assumptions with those of each of the learners in the classroom environment. It is that balance that enables the educator to demonstrate care, regard, and valuing of each learner.

As an early childhood educator I could value and honour the process of change and individual growth that occurs for each young child. I knew and trusted that each child would learn and grow. I am not sure that I always trusted that change and growth would happen for the young adults in the college classroom. All I could see for such a long time were behaviours that I labelled unhappiness and resistance to learning.

I now see that the process of change for each young learner is highly individualistic, and the timing required for making meaningful change varies greatly. Real change demands so much of a person—and a young person with fewer life skills and experiences may not initially be able to assess the need for change or identify strategies for making changes. Certainly the young women in this study were able to clearly articulate the emotional toll demanded of them in their first year in college and in making the transition from high school to college. The transformation of a young person to adult status requires the giving up of old ways of doing and being, a leap that may be filled with uncertainty and even fear. The metaphor of "getting a life" still seems very apt

to me for describing this process--a leap into a new way of being or doing. I believe as an educator I will be better able to appreciate and value the changes required of these young women in their transition into adulthood.

As I turn my eyes from the young women in my college classroom I have the opportunity to also look at myself. I feel reinvigorated and find that I am filled with new energy and enthusiasm for the task of teaching. I know that there are many ways for me to engage in teaching and to support the learners in the classroom. I have a new framework for my own learning and teaching that taps the intellect but also the heart. Teaching is, in Schmier's (1995) words, "conversing intimately at the emotional level with individual students; it's helping, encouraging, and supporting each student to find for himself or herself that adventurous spirit within, to tap into it, and use it to become a future adventurer" (p. 152). I want to continue to be a partner in the journey of each learner in the classroom and hopefully that will aid me in continuing to be a learner, too.

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Appendix A: Letter of Introduction

Letter of Introduction

Entering college for the first time in one's life is exciting. So many new things to do and discover. Each of you are making decisions about your future – pursuing education, choosing jobs and careers, moving into adulthood.

I want to understand this transition better, so would like to invite you to participate in a study. This project is for my own educational program of obtaining a graduate degree in adult and higher education.

If you are entering the Early Childhood Development program directly from high school, and would be willing to spend approximately 30 minutes of your time I would appreciate your participation. I will have four or five questions for you to respond to, in writing.

Your participation is requested, with the full knowledge that you can choose to contribute or to withdraw, at any time. As well, your participation is not tied with your enrollment in the Early Childhood Development program. Anyone who chooses to support my learning will have their identity and ideas protected, by the signing of an informed consent form. Written materials or their content will be shared anonymously, only, with myself and my University advisors.

Please mark your calendar for ___(Date)____ at 11:30. We will meet in Room _____. At that time I will be pleased to answer any further questions you may have with regards to your contribution to my research.

Thank you for your support.

Appendix B: Written Consent Form

Written Consent Form

To participants in this study:

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta at Edmonton. The subject of my research is "School to work: College experience and its influence on young adult women." I am seeking as participants, women in Edmonton, Alberta who entered community college as young adults, under twenty years of age.

As a part of this study, you are asked to participate in two sessions to respond in writing to a set of questions. The questions will be focused on your experiences while in high school, your choice of career and finally, your experiences while in college. One session will be conducted Fall, 1996 and the second, Spring, 1997.

My goal is to analyse the materials from your questionnaires in order to understand better your experience and that of other women who enter college as young adults. I am interested in the details of your life story, what experiences and feelings emerged from your educational experiences, what motivated you to enter college and the process by which you selected your area of training. As part of the thesis I will be using material from your questionnaire to describe the special situation of young women at a particular point in time.

At the completion of the first year in the program, a small number of you will be invited to participate in individual interviews, 1 ½ to 2 hours in length, to explore in greater depth, your college experiences. Each interview will be audio taped and later transcribed by myself. I will provide you with a copy of the transcription from your interview to allow you to check for the accuracy of the account and to provide you with

the opportunity to offer further clarification. In all written materials and oral presentations, in which I might use materials from your interview, I will not use your name, names of people close to you, or the name of your college or city. Transcripts will be typed with initials for names, and in final form the interview material will use pseudonyms.

Participants who agree to be a part of this study will likely enjoy the process. The main activities, the written responses to the questionnaires and the interview, can be a comfortable, and often beneficial experience for the participant. Whenever one enters into a research process, discussing one's personal life, views and feelings, there is the possibility of personal discomfort with self disclosing. It is the participant's right to withdraw from the study at any point, without penalty.

All original questionnaires, tapes and transcripts will be kept confidential and securely locked until the completion of the project. At this time all tapes will be erased, and original questionnaires and transcripts will be destroyed.

Thank you for your time and support of my learning.

I, ... have read the above statement and agree to participate under the conditions stated above.

.....	.....	.....
Signature of participant	Signature of researcher	Date

Appendix C: Questionnaire Administered to Participants

October 21, 1996

The following five questions are focused on three areas of my study; high school, college, and career/job. I am interested in hearing about your views, experiences, and stories as they relate to the questions. Try to answer them as completely as you can – the more you can tell me the more I will be able to understand your experience as a young adult in a college setting. Thank you for your assistance and participation in my learning.

1. **Was there anything from your experiences in high school that prepared you for college?**

2. **Who was a significant person encouraging you to continue your education after high school? How did they influence you?**

3. **Why did you choose to study Early Childhood Development? If Early Childhood Development was not your first choice, what was?**

4. **How do you know that the Early Childhood Development program is right for you?**

5. **What do you think your first year in college will be like?**

Appendix D: Presentation Handout

"Getting a life: A metaphor for growth"

Presentation Handout

Pamela Taylor

Abstract

A key question for postsecondary education is: "What influence does college have on the development and learning of young women?" This session presents the findings of a research study on the personal and academic development of young women as they experience the transitions integral to the "natural process of disorientation and reorientation that mark the turning points on the path of growth."

Introduction

The question under inquiry was "What influence does college have on young women in the transition from school-to-work?" The critical element was to hear the voices of the youngest participants. As well, it is important to understand a young woman's reality as she makes this important transition of a youth moving into adulthood, "a process rather than an arbitrary event in one's life" (Galaway & Hudson, 1996, p. XIV). Heinz states transitions are "best conceptualized as co-products of individual biographies and decisions and available opportunities as well as imposed restrictions"(1996, p. 3).

Participants chose to study Early Childhood Development at a large, urban community college and were enrolled in the first year of a two-year diploma program. Studies in this program foster skill development and the knowledge to work with the youngest children in our society. Graduates learn to accept the challenges associated with providing quality care; to establish partnerships with families to provide this care; to view each child as a unique human being; to gain an appreciation for people with diverse lifestyles, values, cultural backgrounds, ethnic origins, religious beliefs, and foster

healthy living habits. Students learn developmentally appropriate childcare practices in four field placement practicums.

Students, 17-20 years of age, enter college as "Stage 1" or "younger young adults--persons in their late teens and early twenties," as defined by Darkenwald and Knox (1984, p. 100). Psychologically, young adults are seeking to resolve issues surrounding the "internal concerns" (Darkenwald & Knox, 1984, p. 101) of independence, identity, and intimacy. Merriam (1984) has characterized this period of life as having its "own unique constellation of psychological issues and sociocultural tasks," and it is the "clustering of these individual issues and tasks during young adulthood that sets this stage of adulthood apart from other stages" (p. 3). Rather than viewing them as too young or immature it is important to see this transition through their eyes. Tylare, Sarah, Emma, Jennifer, Amanda, and Jayne, (as participants, each selected a new name to protect her identity), provide invaluable insights about their journey into adulthood in this study.

Findings

Five areas framed the research, focusing on how the young women's high school experiences prepared them for college, the choice of their specific area of study (Early Childhood Development), a significant person that encouraged further education, how they knew early childhood was the right program for them, and last, their first year college experiences.

Initially, life in the classroom is impacted by the previous experiences accompanying the young adult into college. For these female learners their high school education was of questionable value--ill-preparing them for college. A lack of enjoyment or enthusiasm for learning was evident when they were asked to describe their

experiences in high school. As well, participants openly discussed personal behaviours that negatively impacted their learning.

Certainly the participants' view of the future from the steps of high school was not overly positive or filled with possibilities. Difficulties with academic subjects, negative attitudes towards learning, assignments not viewed as a priority, and lowered self-esteem had impacted their academic performance. Had these young women experienced enough successes on which to build a plan for their futures?

Explaining their choice of early childhood development as an area of study, each of the research participants described the work that they had already done in this field. Initially, it appeared that the basis for making the decision arose from previous work or life experiences with children. The power of these learning experiences, external to the formal school environment, would appear to affirm what constitutes meaningful learning for young women. They each had lived or worked with children and found personal satisfaction in such work. Each "knew" what they wanted for a career. Or did they?

When probed about their choice of a college program, participants identified other programs they would have preferred to pursue, insufficient grades that created barriers to their first choice of study, or stated they would use the early childhood program as a stepping stone to achieving some other goal. Only one of the participants stated that early childhood was clearly her first choice of study and the preferred area for future employment.

From the interviews it quickly became apparent the significant role parents play, especially mothers, in knowing their daughters and being able to provide clarity and guidance to the decision-making process, and encouraging their future education.

Looking for the right answers, the women sought direction from the authorities in their lives, to guide them. Initially, as "received knowers" (Clinchy, 1994, p. 119) the young women relied on an authority, parents or some other person for knowledge about themselves--an external truth found in the words of the important people in one's life. Knowledge received in this way, externally, is ingested but not created or evaluated by the receiver. It is noted that this is a position (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) frequently held by very young adult students just beginning their college careers, listening to others, seeking direction, so that they will do the right thing.

Asked to speak on their first year in college, participants quickly identified the negative aspects of this experience. Even with the assurance of an authority figure, or a choice of studies believed to be personally meaningful, entry into college significantly impacted the young women. Experiencing high levels of stress, needing long periods of sleep, homesickness, emotional "breakdowns," loss of peers and childhood friends, and feeling overwhelmed by the dual responsibilities of home and school were some of the negative elements identified by the young women.

The first year in college did generate positive feelings and offer positive experiences to the young women. Participants were quick to identify that they "learned a lot"--especially in child development classes. The second area that excited learners was the field placement practicums enabling the women "to see that those things in class do work."

As the young women continued to speak, they began to reflect, looking back over their first year experiences. Each woman began to describe her personal journey and increasingly the personal connection she was making to her own learning. An

examination of the text of the young women's words shows that the language suddenly shifts as they describe and reflect on the end of their first year in college, and their personal motivation and sense of involvement in their own learning. A new reality appears, to enable us to see and know "that which is true, that is, that which has reality" (Ashton, 1994, p. 365) and thus, the use of the metaphor "getting a life."

This new reality, of "getting a life," a phenomenon reflected in the responses of the young women as they described their experiences after completion of the first year in college. Jennifer's comments act as a pivotal moment, causing us to look again at the changes she has experienced: "I knew at the beginning of the year I was pretty negative....But I think how I just turned around. To be, to make everything positive.... A step in my life that, you know."

Each young woman had become more exploratory in her orientation to differing values, and job or career possibilities. College has impacted them: creating the possibility of change. As each spoke new ideas about their identity were developing, hearing aloud their voices, testing the water to see how they had changed, and how they would appear to themselves and to others. By hearing their voices we can begin to see that the source of knowledge originates from within, as "subjective knowers" (Clinchy, 1994, p. 119) knowledge derived from firsthand, personal experiences.

Conclusion

The college environment offers a setting, a community in which to experience "the natural process of disorientation and reorientation" (Bridges, 1980, p. 5) that is required if younger young adult is to successfully make the transition into adulthood. The earlier transition, in the words of Brown and Gilligan (1992) was "a crossroads in

women's development:...an intersection between psychological health and cultural regeneration" (p. 1). The need to address the health and well being of women and their role in the community continue to be relevant concerns leaving adolescence, but as well, upon entering adulthood.

In response to the question: "What does a woman need to know?" (Belenky et al., 1986) the answer is, "that she is capable of intelligent thought" (p. 193). The surprising discovery of being able to think, to engage fully with ideas, became evident in the words of these young women. In their final interviews they began to construct powerful truths about themselves and to find personal meaning from their experiences in a college program. The college experience afforded them opportunities to think about themselves and the lives they wanted to create.

While initially seeking knowledge of themselves from identified authorities, ultimately, they received "confirmation that they could be trusted to know and to learn" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 195). This is a powerful message to be given and to hear, as a first year student. As well, the participants gain a group of women as partners in their learning and career preparation. Two important elements, "confirmation and community" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 194) provide the basis of further development, as they move into year two of the college experience.

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Appendix E: Monograph Proposal

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SPECIAL ACTIVITY FUND

1. DESCRIPTION

The Faculty Development Committee of Grant MacEwan Community College allocates a Special Activity Fund (formerly Short Term Leave Fund) which is used to fund faculty development activities for educational, instructional, personal and/or career development. During the coming year, approximately $25,000 will be available to faculty members through this fund. The usual range of funding per activity is $500 to $7,000 and the length of activity is usually no more than 10 months. The activity must take place during the 1998/99 academic year.

This fund is intended to be utilized when the proposed activity is not covered by Sabbatical Leave funding, the Instructional Development fund, or regular Faculty Development funding. The fund will tend to assist the faculty member with replacement costs, tuition, travel and other expenses related to the activity.

All faculty members are eligible to apply for funding and each application will be assessed equally according to the criteria and factors indicated. The fund will be made available to sessional and term faculty members provided they are able to meet the established criteria.

Not all funds need be allocated by the Faculty Development Committee in any one year.

The 1998/99 academic year is the seventh year Special Activity Funding will be made available to term faculty.

2. CRITERIA

A sub-committee of the Central Faculty Development Committee shall review all applications for funding from the Faculty Development Special Activity Fund (FDSAF), and assess the merits of each application in accordance with the following criteria.

a. the contribution to the college made by the member;

b. the length of his/her service to the college, considered in both calendar years and pro-rated "service years";

c. the value to the college of the experience sought by the member;

d. the value of the experience as a developmental activity for the member;

e. the level of planning, research or preparation for the activity shown by the member;

f. the level of commitment to the endeavour through devotion of either time or personal funds;

g. the recommendation of the appropriate program chair and dean or officer.

3. **FACTORS**

In addition to the above criteria, the following factors shall be taken into consideration by the Faculty Development Committee:

a. the impact of any absence by the member on the normal operation of the college if a leave of absence is applied for;

b. if the applicant chooses to take a course or program outside Alberta, even though that activity is offered in Alberta, funding may be limited to the amount it costs in Alberta;

c. partial funding of an activity may be recommended by the committee;

d. if funds are limited and proposals or projects are of equal merit, those who have received recent faculty development funding may be given lower priority;

e. requests which more properly fall under the Sabbatical Leave Fund or other sources of funding will not be considered;

f. where an applicant is a term faculty member, the committee must be satisfied that there is a strong likelihood of subsequent reappointment to the college. At the same time, the granting of Special Activity funds is **not** to be interpreted as a representation that any subsequent term appointment will be granted;

g. term faculty will not normally be granted funds for the payment of release time (replacement costs). Generally, term faculty will be eligible to receive out-of-pocket expenses necessary to support the developmental activity.

4. APPLICATION PROCEDURES

a. Before you apply . . .

i. It is recommended that you discuss your plans in advance with your program/section chair and dean, or at least advise them of your intention to apply for funding.

ii. Consider whether it may be appropriate to apply for funding from a source other than faculty development. Your idea may fall more clearly within the area of Program and Instructional Development or you may be eligible to be funded by the Outreach Development Fund or from your divisional or program budgets.

iii. If your plans do come within the area of your own faculty development, then consider whether it would be more appropriate to use your individual decentralized funding, or perhaps you should be applying for a Sabbatical Leave rather than Special Activity funding.

iv. You may wish to discuss your plans with the Faculty Development Office before applying.

b. When you apply . . .

When calculating your "service years" at the college, contact the Human Resources Department if you require assistance.

When calculating the costs associated with your activity, contact the Faculty Development office if you require assistance. Please attempt to be as accurate as possible in cost estimations. Normally, a request for release time (replacement costs) will be limited to two courses per academic year.

Completed application forms must be received by the Faculty Development Office by **May 1, 1998** for activities commencing July 1 to December 31, 1998 OR by **November 1, 1998** for activities commencing January 1 to June 30, 1999. At the discretion of the committee, retroactive applications for a project which occurred in the six months prior to the deadline may be funded. Under no circumstances can the same project be submitted more than twice. **NO LATE APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

Your application must include the recommendations of your program/section chair and dean. It is the responsibility of the faculty member to ensure that these questions are completed prior to the application deadline.

It is advisable to allow sufficient time for your supervisors to complete their sections of the application form.

Applicants will be interviewed by a sub-committee of the Faculty Development Committee; however, not all applicants will necessarily be interviewed in person. All candidates will be notified of the date and time of interviews as soon as possible following the application deadline. The applicant's chair and dean will not be present at the interviews.

The sub-committee will bring its recommendations to the Central Faculty Development Committee. Applicants will be notified of the committee's decision as early as possible in December (for the November 1 deadline) or June (for the May 1 deadline).

All faculty, including the Faculty Development Coordinator, are eligible to apply for funding. Should a member of the Faculty Development Committee apply, that member shall not take part in the selection process, but shall be considered equally with all other applicants.

Successful applicants will be required to sign an agreement outlining the terms and conditions of Special Activity funding. These terms include a final report to the Faculty Development Office, copied to your chair and dean.

Please note that faculty development funding of an educational activity leading to a credential or degree does not necessarily ensure recognition of that credential or degree for salary placement purposes under the faculty collective agreement.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT
SPECIAL ACTIVITY FUND

Grant MacEwan Community College

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE. This application is accessible on p:\staff\common\safappl.for. Additional information may be requested at a future date.

APPLICANT INFORMATION:

1. NAME: PAMELA TAYLOR

POSITION: INSTRUCTOR

TYPE OF APPOINTMENT (please circle one of the below):

FULL-TIME CONTINUING PART-TIME CONTINUING SESSIONAL TERM

PROGRAM/SECTION: EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

DIVISION: HEALTH AND COMMUNITY STUDIES

BUSINESS PHONE: _____ HOME PHONE: _____

DATE OF COMMENCEMENT OF EMPLOYMENT WITH GMCC: SEPTEMBER, 1978

NUMBER OF GMCC SERVICE YEARS* TO JULY 1, 1998: 19 YEARS, 7 MONTHS

* Your service year total is a pro-rated calculation based on workload. This figure may be obtained from Human Resources.

For Office Use Only
Verified H.R.

2. Briefly describe your regular responsibilities at the College:

I am a full time instructor teaching three different first year courses; ECDV 100, Introduction to Early Childhood - two sections, ECDV 105, Health, Nutrition and Safety - one section, and ECDV 155, Learning Through Play - one section. I also teach two sections of a second year course, ECDV 255, Child Development III.

I am responsible for teaching one or two sections of Integration Seminar each trimester; ECDV 125, ECDV 175, ECDV 225 and ECDV 275.

Each trimester I provide field placement supervision for first and second year students, at all levels; ECDV 120, ECDV 170, ECDV 220 and ECDV 275.

I maintain ongoing communication with all evening instructors who teach the same courses as myself. I am responsible for organizing formal meetings annually, each Spring. As well, due to the turnover in instructors in our evening program, I meet informally throughout the year with new instructors. I have the responsibility to maintain the integrity of our program and to ensure that the essential elements of each course are being taught.

3. List your THREE major contributions to GMCC in addition to your regular responsibilities:

a. I have been our program's representative with the College Connection program. In this role I have had the opportunity to work with two students and the staff who facilitate their learning. I bring forward to the ECD staff any issues or any changes in the program for these students and insure that everyone is aware of the commitments that we have made to this program. I have also been involved in the selection of appropriate field placement experiences for our students and insuring that they are in supportive environments.

b. Day Care, Diversity and Health: Research in Action. With one of my colleagues in the ECD program I have served on the steering committee for this research project. This has been an ideal opportunity for me to work with a multidiscipline group, examining the relationships between the physical, mental and social health of caregivers, families and children. One of the challenges that this project has offered me has been to return to a day care setting one day a week and explore ways to provide on-the-job training to day care staff.

c. Since March 1998 I have had the opportunity to present my research to a number of audiences. This has been a very positive experience for me, enabling me to hear from others as to the relevance of my work. I presented in a teaching colloquium to GMCC faculty, to representatives of eight of the ten ECD college programs in Alberta, to the staff in my own program, and to the staff of the Legal Assistant program. In May 1998 I also made a presentation at the Child Care Conference to administrators of child care programs.

4. What are your present academic qualifications?

a. Degree/diploma Bachelor of Arts
Subject area Child Care
Institution University of Victoria

b. Degree/diploma Master of Education in
Subject area Adult and Higher Education
Institution University of Alberta
(coursework completed)

c. Degree/diploma _____
Subject area _____
Institution _____

5. List funded leaves or other faculty development activities supported by the college taken in the last five years:

1. September 1994 - June 1995
   - sabbatical to pursue studies towards Master's degree

2. 1995 - 1996
   - Faculty development funds applied to my continuing university course work.

3. ECPAA Conference - March 1996
   Annual conference, Red Deer, Alberta

4. ACIFA Conference
   Annual conference June 1997

5. Lilly Conference on College and University Teaching
   October 1998, Portland, Oregon

OUTLINE OF REQUEST:

6. a) Outline the details of your planned activity - what, where, with whom? Please provide attachments if this space is insufficient:

   - see attachment

   b) If the activity has already occurred, please indicate what you gained from participating and how you will share what you learned with others in the College.

   N/A

7. a. Length of activity: _____ months.

   b. Dates of proposed activity:

   From January, 1999 to April, 1999.

8. If applicable, list courses/work already completed towards your activity objective:

   Research on topic completed as content towards the completion of graduate work.

BENEFITS OF YOUR PROPOSED ACTIVITY:

9. What are the immediate outcome goals and objectives of this special activity? How will your evaluate it or measure its success?

- see attachment

10. What are your career or professional objectives and how are they related to this activity?

Professional objectives:
- project fulfills one more of my goals towards the completion of graduate work

- create a document that allows my learning to support the teaching skills/knowledge of colleagues in GMCC

- continue to develop writing skills and presenting ideas in a s scholarly manner

11. How will your activity benefit yourself, your program and GMCC? What plans do you have to apply what you have learned to the College? Try to be specific:

Generally, I feel that questions 10 and 11 overlap for this project. The only additional benefit I can identify would be to the ECD program - I would be one step closer to our program's requirement that faculty have a minimum of a masters degree in a related field.

PLEASE NOTE THESE CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

a. If the activity is for academic purposes, a course plan approved by the institution and verification of admission will be required before final approval is granted.

b. If the activity will take place in a company or agency, final approval will not occur until a letter of acceptance has been submitted from the agency concerned.

LEVEL OF COMPLETION OF ACTIVITY PLANS:

12. a. Are your plans confirmed?

b. If not confirmed, when are you expecting confirmation?

c. What parts of your plans are still incomplete?

FUNDS REQUESTED:

13. Total Funds Requested: $ 465.00

14. Detailed breakdown of total funds requested: (replacement salary and benefits [the specific percentage of benefits may be obtained from Human Resources]), tuition, travel/accommodation, other expenses (please list)):

Editor $40.00 per hour x 6 hours = $240.00

Typist $25.00 per hour x 7 hours = $175.00

Printing costs $3.50 - $5.00 per copy with a commercial folder (10 copies)

Graphic design for cover and back page (GMCC logo) $40.00 per hour x 1 hour = $40.00

15. Do you plan to use your decentralized faculty development funding toward supporting your activity? If so, please indicate how much of this funding you plan to use.

If not, why?

1997/98 funds allocated for full time faculty development have been utilized to cover costs incurred as a presenter/participant at the Lilly Conference, October 28-30, 1998.

16. Funds expected from external source, if any: $

Name external source:

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

I am aware that there are some items I have left unanswered. I responded to the items or questions that seemed to relate to my project.

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

17. Signature: _____ Date: _____, 19_____

INSTRUCTIONS: Items 18 and 19 must be completed and submitted on or prior to May 1st or November 1st as appropriate to the Faculty Development Office.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The program chair and dean are asked to indicate their support or non-support of the application. If support is not indicated, the supervisors may suggest the conditions under which the application would be acceptable or the reasons for non-support.

If a program chair or dean does not approve a faculty member's application, it is recommended that the supervisors meet with the faculty member to explain their reasons for non-approval.

The following questions should be addressed in the recommendations from the program chair and dean:

1. How will this activity benefit the applicant? Please comment on any benefits in terms of the applicant's instructional, professional, organizational or personal development.
2. How will this activity benefit the program/college?
3. How is your program or division supporting this activity (ie. financial, release time, etc.)?
4. Your recommendation.

18. Program Chair - Recommendations (use additional page if necessary)

(see attached)

For term applicants - Do you plan to re-appoint this individual? (Please circle one of the following.)

Yes No Maybe

Please explain.

Signature: _____ Date: _____, 19____

Name:
(Please print or type)

19. Dean - Recommendations (use additional page if necessary)

Signature: _____ Date: _____, 19____

Name:
(Please print or type)

To Whom It May Concern:

Pam Taylor has done some exciting research and study about the young adult learning in a college environment. Our program and the other Early Childhood Development College department heads have already benefited from her work as she has done presentations to both groups.

I think it is vitally important to get this material out to the wider college community. The monograph approach will provide the written document that would be valuable for all teachers of beginning college students. The insights from this material have direct relevance for classroom teaching as well as selection of students.

It is critical that instructors understand the developmental stages of students to teach them and to encourage their learning. This monograph will address these issues.

Pam has requested a relatively small amount of money that will be used to benefit may people within the college and in other institutions. She has only requested the money or editing/typing and printing.

I fully support this request.

Jennifer Wolfe
Program Chair
Early Childhood Development

10/13/98

Attachment: 6 a) and 9

For the purpose of this proposal, my request for special activity funding, I am combining two items: #6 a) detailed outline of the planned activity and #9 benefits of the proposed activity.

My return to university to pursue graduate studies has been an exciting and demanding learning experience for me. The learning has continued as I have pursued a less traditional format, than a thesis, for presenting my research. I have presented my research to a number of different audiences within the college and as well, in the broader community. I have also been writing a number of pieces on my research, each highlighting different aspects of my learning. I saw this plan as enabling me to meet a number of goals that I had for completing my masters.

The goal that I would like to address in this proposal relates to my relationship with the college and my teaching colleagues. I received full support from Faculty Development for the funded sabbatical that allowed me to return to school. As such, I would like to "repay," with the knowledge that I have gained, creating a document that could potentially be useful to others teaching young adults in their classrooms. I want to move my research beyond a solitary experience: informing only myself. While young adult women were the focus of my research, I do believe that there are generalizations that can be made with regards to this age group, 17 - 20 years of age.

I would like to write a single subject monograph, approximately 20 - 25 pages in length on the subject, "Teaching young adults in the college classroom." I would see this document as having usefulness for college instructors wishing to increase their awareness and knowledge of the learners in the classroom. As well I would look at the literature that speaks to the developmental needs of this age group and suggestions for teaching young adults. It is my hope that by sharing the knowledge I have gained, a dialogue can be initiated encouraging all of us to look at our role as educators and our teaching effectiveness.

Through my work I hope to enable others to appreciate the young adult learner, as an individual with personal strengths, and as a positive presence in any learning environment.

My plan would be to write the monograph in the Winter 1999 trimester. I would be seeking financial support to cover the costs of typing, editing, and printing of the document. I would be pleased to speak to this proposal and to present an example of the format I will be using.

Appendix F: Newspaper Interview

Faulder, L. (1998, June 23). No white knights, girls: get a job that pays. Edmonton Journal, p. B1.

For many mothers and daughters, high school graduation is dominated by dresses and dates. Grant MacEwan instructor, Pam Taylor, wants to broaden the focus to something more.

Taylor, who is nearing the end of a two-year long research project on young women and college, says mothers have a more profound impact on their daughter's career choices than they might imagine.

She wants mothers to use that influence to direct daughters towards the best possible jobs.

The research project stemmed from Taylor's own experiences as an instructor in early childhood education for the past 18 years. The college used to cater largely to adult learners, but in the last 10 years, more students right out of high school were ending up in Taylor's class. Taylor was concerned about the attitude of students, 99 per cent of whom are female.

Young women weren't participating in her classes. They were silent and didn't make eye contact, causing Taylor at first to question her own teaching. Later, she talked to the students and discovered many of them had no clue why they were there.

So Taylor decided to study the motivation of young women entering college. She went back to university to pursue a master's degree and as part of her thesis, intensely interviewed five young women studying early childhood education at the college.

She found the young women made career choices based on the fact that someone, often their mothers, had told them they were good with kids. The students had little sense of their own desires and talents.

Taylor also found that when the young women chose early childhood education, few considered that they would have to support themselves or their families on meager earnings. They expected a husband with a well-paid job to come along eventually.

"I don't think we're doing a very good job of showing young women how complex the lives of women are today," says Taylor ruefully.

Taylor's thesis is long and detailed. It's hard to do her work justice in a short column. But a lot of food for thought can be gleaned even by skimming the surface of this one.

Why do young women today not realize the importance of a job that earns a living wage? Hasn't anyone told these girls that the majority of today's women with children work outside the home, many out of sheer economic necessity?

I'd like to think it was otherwise, because this society needs child care workers who are bright, and committed, but frankly, choosing a career in the daycare field is an invitation to poverty.

So you're good with kids. Why not be a pediatrician or a teacher? Why do so many young women set their sights so low?

Taylor says all of the young women identified themselves as non-academic material, even though they were all bright with lots of potential. Somehow, they had set themselves up, or been set up by teachers or parents, to minimize their own talent.

"So many of them short-changed themselves," says Taylor.

Parents, particularly mothers, are the ones who have the greatest opportunity to change that attitude, says Taylor. She doesn't claim to have all the answers; she's the mother of teenagers and knows it's pretty hard to connect with a teen who is doing everything she can to distance herself from authority.

But Taylor knows the dialogue has to start way before high school. "The time to engage young girls is at nine or 10 when they are in a much more positive position," she says.

If that hasn't happened and parents still hope [to] make a difference, they can help young women to tackle psychological barriers to a successful career:

"So often I heard from the young women, "That's too hard, this is all I can do," says Taylor, adding parents have to help children to break down seemingly impossible tasks into manageable components.

Parents need to let their daughters know life isn't over at 18 if you didn't get a good mark in math. What about upgrading? Some goals take longer to achieve than others.

Trite as it may sound, the answer begins in talking long, hard and early with young women about the reality of their futures. Work is going to be a big part of their lives and they will likely have to juggle a family around that. That alone has enormous implications.

Says Taylor: "We need to give young people a better sense of what getting a life is all about."